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THE

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ASSISTED BY

EMINENT LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN.

Biography.

EMINENT

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN.

ENGLISH POETS.

BY

ROBERT BELL, ESQ

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

This work will consist of two volumes. The design is to make such a selection as may exhibit, through the lives of the principal poets, the chief points of interest in the course and history of English poetry. In the accomplishment of this object all the existing sources of literary biography have, it is believed, been consulted and diligently investigated.

These biographies commence with the middle of the sixteenth century,—the poets antecedent to Drayton having been previously included in a volume on the early English writers.

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LIVES

OF

EMINENT

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC MEN.

ENGLISH POETS.

MICHAEL DRAYTON.

1563—1631.

WITH NOTICES OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

We can hardly complain that few particulars have been preserved of the life of Drayton, since the biographies of Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakspeare, consist of mere fragments to which the investigations of succeeding times have added only some slight speculations. If the greatest men of the early periods of English literature were thus neglected by their contemporaries, it would be unreasonable to expect that a minor poet should receive a larger measure of consideration.

The family name of Drayton is said to have been derived from a town in Leicestershire*; but previously to the birth of the poet his father removed into War-

* The fact is recorded by Barton (1622) in his account of Leicestershire.

wickshire, in which county, at the village of Harshull, or Hartskill, Michael Drayton was born in 1563.* Of his boyhood very little is known. The place of his birth is determined by a Latin inscription appended to a portrait of him, published during his lifetime with a complete edition of his works†; but at what time he went to London, or under what circumstances, has not been ascertained. At an early age he discovered a strong passion for literary pursuits, and is said to have made such an impression upon his instructors by the sweetness of his temper, as to be recommended while he was yet but ten years old to the patronage of some people of distinction. About 1573 he was taken into the household of a person of honour in the capacity of page, which is probable enough, as in his later years he appears to have subsisted chiefly on the favour of the great. He could then construe Latin, and was above all things ambitious to become a poet. Who his first patron was is a matter of conjecture: his name is lost in the common oblivion that has fallen upon nearly all the personal literary history of the time. But to the generosity of that patron, whoever he was, it is likely Drayton was indebted for an university education. It does not appear that he had any professional object in being entered at Oxford, or if he had he abandoned it; for there is no further trace of his course at college than a passing allusion by sir Aston Cockayne, who, although principally educated at Cambridge, was a master of arts

* In the Poly-olbion, Drayton alludes affectionately to Warwickshire, as the place of his birth: —

"My native county then, which so brave spirits hast bred,
If there be virtue yet remaining in thy earth,
Or any good of thine thou bred'st unto my birth,
Accept it as thine own, whilst now I sing of thee;
Of all thy later brood th' unworthiest though I be."

Thirteenth Song.

† See Biographia Britannica. The following is the inscription: —

Lux Hareshulla tibi (Warwici villa, tenebris
Ante tuas cunas, obsita) prima fuit.
Arma, Viros, Veneres, Patriam modulamine dixti;
Te Patriæ resonant Arma, Viri, Veneres.

of Oxford. Speaking of Oxford, that pleasant boon companion and agreeable poet says,

> "Here smooth-tongued Drayton was inspired by
> Mnemosyne's manifold progeny."

Sir Aston Cockayne was born in 1608, was personally acquainted with Drayton, and may therefore be accepted as a competent authority upon this point; but it is not a little curious that Anthony à Wood omits Drayton's name, not only in the Fasti, but in his account of the writers who were educated at Oxford, although throughout his industrious biographies Drayton is frequently alluded to as one of the popular poets of his age. The omission is by no means conclusive of the fact that Drayton never was at Oxford, because such a supposition could be entertained only on the assumption that the Athenæ Oxoniensis and the Fasti really contain the names of all the persons who were educated at that university during the period to which they refer — an assumption which, we need scarcely observe, would commit us to some erroneous inferences.* That Drayton studied in the university may be admitted on the testimony of sir Aston Cockayne, who lived in the time when the circumstance must have been familiar to his contemporaries, who could have easily refuted it had it been unfounded. In several of his poems Drayton gracefully acknowledges that he was bound to the liberality of sir Henry Goodere of Polesworth, for most of the advantages of his education, which would favour the conjecture

* Bliss, in the preface to the fourth volume of the last edition of the Athenæ Oxoniensis, observes that in that edition the reader has a complete history of the Oxford writers for two centuries; but we may venture to question the accuracy of that assertion, since Mr. Bliss himself added several new lives, a proof of the incompleteness of the original work: and unless he possessed the means of exhausting the subject, which is very unlikely at such a distance of time, the publication cannot be said to embrace the whole circle of Oxonians. Mr. Bliss's edition of Mr. Wood's inestimable work cannot be too highly prized for the great care and research that have been bestowed upon it: and we derogate nothing from its intrinsic value, in observing that while it contains a vast quantity of useful and curious information, which in fact cannot be obtained any where else, it is not so comprehensive as to render further investigations unnecessary, especially in reference to persons who, like Drayton, left the university without taking out a degree.

that it was in sir Harry's suite he served in his boyhood. The fact, however, rests upon no more clear or circumstantial evidence than the poetical and somewhat rhapsodical panegyrics of a poet, addressed to a gentleman who had conferred many kindnesses upon him. Fortunately the satisfaction of the doubt is not of much consequence.

Drayton left Oxford before he completed the usual term of an university education, and, like most of the men of genius of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, went to London as the grand field of intellectual exertion. How he fared in the experiment can only be surmised from vague hints and allusions scattered through his poems and dedications, the ambiguous vouchers of his fame and fortunes. It is conjectured, from a description in one of his poems of the celebrated Spanish invasion in 1588, that he must have been a spectator of the defeat of the Armada at Dover, and that probably he then held some military post or employment there; but it is certain that he was distinguished as a poet at least ten years before the death of queen Elizabeth. During that reign he published several works, and unquestionably, for fertility of invention and productive industry, he will bear comparison with the most prolific writers of his time. The earliest volume that has been preserved of Drayton's was printed in quarto in 1593, with the quaint title of Idea; or the Shepherd's Garland, partitioned in nine Eglogs, with Rowland's Sacrifices to the Nine Muses. This collection was afterwards reprinted with emendations in the first folio edition of his works, under the title of Pastorals. It is in these poems, perhaps more than in his larger works, that the genuine rural simplicity of Drayton may be discovered; yet, by a strange dispensation of critical authority, they were wholly left out of Dodsley's edition of what professed to be his entire works, issued in 1748—an edition which was also deficient in several other of his compositions. The eclogues are remarkable for purity of diction, variety of structure, and a hearty love of nature. This pub-

lication was followed at short intervals by several works; and before 1598, that is to say, within five years from the date of his Pastorals, he had already given to the world his Barons' Wars, England's Heroical Epistles, Historical Legends, consisting of the stories of Robert of Normandy, Matilda, and Pierce Gaveston, and a portion of that singular poem by which he is best known to posterity, the Poly-olbion.

These works exhibit not merely great facility in composition, a lively imagination, and a complete command of the art of versification, but are equally remarkable for diversity in the choice and treatment of subjects. The plan of the Poly-olbion, of which we shall presently speak more at large, was only indicated in the fragment first published; and it was not until the whole of that extraordinary undertaking was completed, that the powers of Drayton were fully developed. Yet long before he was enabled to finish it, he acquired a distinguished reputation amongst his contemporaries, and was estimated as one of the leading poets of his age. Abundant proofs of the celebrity he enjoyed even at this early period may be found in the commendatory verses attached to the original editions of his several poems, contributed not only by the crowd of panegyrical writers who usually pressed forward on such occasions, perhaps from vain-glory, but also by writers of a graver and more elevated class, who rarely condescended to act as sponsors at the font of poetry. One of them was the learned Selden, who, together with Heywood and Beaumont, addressed Drayton in a highly complimentary spirit upon his Barons' Wars, in the first edition of which their critical and laudatory stanzas are published. The Heroical Epistles are in the same way introduced by verses from the earl of Stirling, a Scotch poet of great repute, Mr. Thomas Hassel, and sir Edmond Scory. These Epistles may be justly ranked amongst the very earliest successful specimens in our language of harmonious versification. They are written in the heroic measure, are twenty-four in number, and

illustrate particular passages in history, which the author judiciously explains and verifies in short notes. Mr. Campbell, in a slight criticism upon Drayton *, observes that he "is prone to Ovidian conceits, but he plays with them so gaily, that they almost seem to become him as if natural." This hint of Drayton's quality must have been intended to apply only to the Epistles, for it certainly will not hold good in reference to his Poly-olbion, his Nymphidia, his odes, or the rest of his works, and is calculated, therefore, without being expressly limited in its application, to convey an erroneous notion of the real character of Drayton's poetry, which, on the main, is more free from the reproach of conceits than that of almost any other writer of the sixteenth century. That Drayton played so gaily with his conceits as to make them seem natural, is at best an equivocal way of expressing a doubt whether they were really conceits, or true images congenial to the temperament of the poet or the genius of his subject. The Epistles have an Ovidian grace unquestionably, and are in fact professedly written in imitation of Ovid; but if we look for similar turns elsewhere throughout the numerous productions of Drayton, we shall look in vain. His manner and diction exhibit a felicitous power of adaptation, and he is didactic or sportive, descriptive, humorous, or passionate, according to the nature of his theme, with an exuberant fancy richly flooding the whole.

Several of these Epistles are especially dedicated to the poet's patrons, and afford us in this way glimpses of his history. We learn from one of them, addressed to the earl of Bedford, that Drayton was indebted to his early friend, sir Henry Goodere, whose liberality he frequently acknowledges, for an introduction to the countess of Bedford, "to whose service," he says, he "was first bequeathed by that learned and accomplished

* Specimens of the British Poets, by Thomas Campbell, in seven volumes, 1819.

gentleman." Another epistle is dedicated to lady Anne Harrington, a connection of the countess; and it appears that the Harrington family had long favoured him with their countenance, a circumstance to which he more than once alludes. Sir John Swinerton, alderman of London, Mr. James Huish, Mrs. Elizabeth Danfield, the daughter and heir of a celebrated lawyer, sir Thomas Nunson, Mr. Edward Lucas, (whose parents, he says, conferred equal favours upon him,) and sir Henry Goodere, nephew of the old sir Henry, who assisted him to the best part of his education, are amongst the friends and patrons to whom the Epistles are inscribed, showing the estimation in which he was held as a man, apart from the honours he received as a poet. We infer also from one of these dedications to sir Walter Acton (more properly Aston), knight of the bath, that he was for many years patronised by him; and it is stated upon other authority, that sir Walter accommodated Drayton with supplies, to afford him leisure to prosecute his more elaborate compositions.* Sir Walter Aston (whose seat was at Tixhall, in Staffordshire), if we may form a conclusion from the terms in which he speaks of him on several occasions, was the most constant of his patrons; and he was also under many obligations to Sackville, earl of Dorset, the Mecænas of his day, in whose house he was at one time domesticated. It was so common a practice, however, for dependent writers to utter extravagant thanks and eulogies, in the inscriptions of their works, that it is very difficult to discriminate between the conventional phrases of purchased panegyric and the expression of real and honest feelings. The patron was always a paragon of greatness and munificence — the dedicator was always in an ecstacy of gratitude. Perhaps the patron had bestowed only a few marks upon his panegyrist, or perhaps he had raised him from obscurity and penury, to reputation and affluence — the tone of the dedication was equally in-

* Biog. Brit.

flated and artificial. In such cases the most acute discernment must fail in the attempt to discriminate between sincerity and adulation; for whether the author had acquired permanent prosperity under the wing of his patron, and desired to make his acknowledgments in a manner commensurate to the weight of his obligations, or whether he had only tasted of patronage and longed for more, he still adopted the same forms of hyperbole, which custom might be said to have rendered imperative. This degrading usage — this humiliating lip-service — must of course be traced to the general uncertainty of literature as a profession. The poet could not rely upon the strength of his genius alone for support: his public was as yet too limited to supply the requisite encouragement for his labours; and he was, therefore, cast upon the mortifying necessity of seeking by less worthy means that fosterage, which, in a later and better instructed age, is yielded by the voluntary suffrage of an enlightened community.

Servility is not more remarkable in the complimentary poems and dedications of Drayton than in other writers of his day; on the contrary, he seems for the most part to have been placed in circumstances that justified such public testimonies of the favours he received; while the terms he employs, making a reasonable allowance for the prevailing taste in such matters, are as frank and honest as could be expected from a man whose subsistence depended upon the good opinion of a few persons, who probably considered themselves entitled to be capricious and exacting. Of Drayton's private life we know little, but it may fairly be presumed to have been free from reproach, since there is no reason to believe that he forfeited, at any time, the protection of his aristocratical friends, although he failed in an effort to establish himself at court on the accession of James I., an event which he celebrated in such indifferent verse as to give serious offence to the king. The history of this transaction is not very clear, although the poet fre-

quently alludes to it in his works*, and does not affect to conceal his chagrin at the issue. According to the author of an Historical Essay on the Life and Writings of Drayton, which was prefixed to the imperfect edition of his works before alluded to, published in 1748, Drayton was employed, through the interest of sir Walter Aston with sir Roger Aston, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber to king James in his minority, as an agent in the correspondence that took place between queen Elizabeth and that prince. "He was the person," observes the writer, "who was entrusted with the messages and letters that passed between his master and queen Elizabeth; and, by the interposition of sir Walter Aston, Mr. Drayton was, in this respect, very useful, in faithfully performing the various services which he was commanded." The statement of so early an intercourse with king James, in affairs of so confidential a nature, would render the subsequent anger of the king the more mysterious, especially as it sprang out of an occasion when the omission rather than the offering of a congratulatory poem might be supposed to constitute a ground of offence, were it not that there is some reason to believe that the statement rests upon incompetent authority. If Drayton's evidence may be accepted, his intimacy with sir Walter Aston did not commence until a much later period; for he expressly says in his dedication of the Barons' Wars, to sir Walter, that he was then in "the spring of his acquaintance," which was only about five or six years before his majesty ascended the throne of England. It may be assumed, therefore, that Drayton possessed no further claim upon the king than he might derive from his favourable position as a man of letters, and the known loyalty of his principles. The affront, consequently, whatever it may have been, was confined to the single circumstance of the congratulatory poem addressed to his majesty upon his arrival in his British dominions, and was not mixed up with

* See the preface to the Poly-olbion, the Elegies, and the Epistle to Mr. George Sandys.

any previous objections of a personal kind in reference to Drayton. Sir Walter Aston, who was created a knight of the Bath upon the ceremony of the coronation, appointed Drayton one of his esquires; but even the marked favour shown to the luckless poet by that liberal courtier failed to propitiate the wrath of his majesty, who could never be induced to forgive him. James, probably, did not consider Drayton's lines sufficiently dexterous and polished for so august an occasion, or thought that they touched too familiarly upon his divine right; but Drayton entertained a very different notion of his coronation-piece (which he never reprinted), reproaching his royal master for frustrating his ambition, and reminding him that he "taught his title to this isle in rhyme." The title, no doubt, was defective enough, and we may not be very wide of the truth in conjecturing that his majesty was not particularly anxious to have more attention drawn to it than could well be avoided. Had the poem been as delicate and artful as even Dryden could have made it, his majesty might still, and with good reason, have objected to its publication.

But, notwithstanding this check to his promotion at court, Drayton is designated in a title-page of a copy of his own verses, written in 1626, and prefixed to the posthumous poems of Abraham Holland, "as Michael Drayton, esquire, and poet-laureate." How he acquired the title has not been ascertained; and it is worthy of observation, that in all the portraits published of him in his own time he was always laureated, which might have been, says a writer in the Biographia Britannica, a compliment of the painters and engravers. His name does not appear in the authentic catalogue of the poets who were, in regular succession, appointed to that office, nor do his works exhibit any evidences of his having ever discharged its ceremonial duties. It is just possible, however, that Drayton may have been invested with the laurel at Oxford, and yet not recognised as the laureate of the court. This conjecture renders a little explanation necessary of the origin of the laurel, and

the distinction which, at an early period, unquestionably existed between the laureates of the colleges and the court.

In a former volume of the biographical series of this work *, the reader will find a few particulars concerning the laureateship, some of which it will be necessary, for the sake of perspicuity, to repeat here. Long before the title of king's laureate occurs in the annals of English poetry, degrees in grammar, including rhetoric and versification, were granted at the universities, on which occasions the graduate was presented with a laurel, and honoured with the appellation of *poeta laureatus.*† Out of this ceremony arose the title of laureate; but as a considerable number of persons must have thus obtained the laurel, and, as many of those who subsequently cultivated poetry may be presumed to have retained the title, it is obvious that several contemporaneous individuals must have claimed the distinction, so long as the colleges continued to confer it. Thus, in Drayton's time, Ben Jonson being the court-laureate, there were, besides Drayton himself, his friend Mr. George Sandys, who was dignified with the designation of poet-laureate, and Francis Quarles ‡, who was lau-

* Literary and Scientific Men of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. iii. p. 99.

† See Warton, *passim.*

‡ Although Quarles is not entitled to much distinction as a poet, yet on many accounts his name ought not to be passed over in silence. He was a man of vigorous intellect, of great sagacity, and unimpeachable integrity. He filled no inconsiderable space in his own day, was reckoned among the principal poets, and enjoyed a popularity for his verses, which are turgid and full of conceits, while his prose, which is sound in structure, and clear and valuable in purpose, was treated with comparative neglect. He was born at Romford, in Essex, in 1592, was educated at Cambridge, entered at Lincoln's Inn, and afterwards preferred to the office of cup-bearer to Elizabeth, daughter of James I., electress palatine and queen of Bohemia. Subsequently he became secretary to the learned archbishop Usher in Ireland; but the breaking out of the rebellion of 1641 compelled him to fly that kingdom and return to London, where he held the appointment of chronologer to the city, a post that had been previously filled by Middleton the dramatist. It appears, however, that he gave offence in one of his pieces to the prevailing powers, who were especially incensed with him because he joined Charles I. at Oxford; and they oppressed him in every way they could, confiscating his property, and amongst other things seizing upon his books and some rare MSS., intended (Biog. Brit.) for the press. These circumstances, particularly the loss of his books affected him so deeply as to hasten his death, which took place in 1644; leaving behind him a large family, having had eighteen children by one wife. His poetry is entirely devotional, but deficient in that fine enthusiasm which imparts such fervour

reated, at least, in one encomiastic tribute. It certainly does not appear to have been customary amongst the students who took out this degree at the university to proclaim it afterwards to the world; and when the royal laureateship was established, the collegiate honour was gradually dropped altogether: yet it is not unreasonable to suppose, that a poet, who had obtained that mark of success at the university, might avail himself of it in later years, to promote his own objects. Drayton, irritated by the treatment he had received from the king, might possibly have designated himself as poet-laureate, for the purpose of galling his majesty, by setting up a sort of opposition to the royal laureate, and in that way taking his revenge upon the court. But the question here arises — was Drayton laureated at Oxford? We have no testimony of the fact, and such evidence as can be gathered on the subject would rather tend to prove that he was not, although it is by no means conclusive.

In the first place, it does not appear that Drayton finished his studies at Oxford; and from the records that have been preserved of the nature of the acquirements and tests which entitled the academical student to this especial reward, we must infer, that it could not

to the verses of Crashaw. He wanted imagination, invention, and feeling, and attempted to make up for the want by artificial means; hence he is quaint, mechanical, and laborious. Yet there are some critics who speak highly of his poetical productions. Fuller, in his "Worthies," declares that Quarles was an excellent poet, and had a mind biassed to devotion: Dr. Lloyd says that he taught poetry to be witty, without profaneness, wantonness, or satire; and archbishop Usher describes him as a man of some fame amongst the English for his sacred poetry. Quarles's poetical reputation, however, did not last long. As soon as Charles II. came in, his works were treated with contempt and ridicule; and Pope, taking the truth of the licentious satires of that time for granted, condemned him at once to oblivion, in one withering line of the "Dunciad." But posterity has reversed that judgment, as it has reversed other decisions pronounced by the same authority. The poetry of Quarles is too starched and conventional to be resuscitated, but his prose writings are beginning to find their way into circulation once more; and there are few compositions of the 17th century more worthy of being revived. His "Emblemes" are forgotten, or known only in those remote corners where all old lore, good and bad, is cherished out of a love of its antiquity, while his "Enchiridion" is every day slowly enlarging the circle of its readers.

have been obtained until a considerable proficiency had been made in a severe course of philology and rhetoric. One or two instances (referred to by Warton) will show what was required of the aspirant to the laurel. In 1470, one student, John Watson, obtained a concession, to be graduated and laureated at Oxford (where this custom prevailed more generally than at Cambridge), on condition that he composed a Latin comedy, and one hundred Latin verses in honour of the university. In another case, the stipulation was, that the candidate should affix the same number of Latin hexameters on the great gates of St. Mary's church, that they might be perused by all the members of the college. Maurice Byrchensaw was admitted to read lectures and take a degree in the faculty of rhetoric, provided he would compose an hundred verses on the university, and prohibit in his auditory the study of Ovid's Art of Love, and the Elegies of Pamphilus. Warton adds, that one John Bulmem having complied with the terms imposed on him, of explaining the first book of Tully's Offices, and also the first of his Epistles, without any pecuniary emolument, received a crown of laurel, which was publicly placed on his head by the hands of the chancellor of the university. Skelton was laureated at Oxford in 1489, and was permitted to wear his laurel at Cambridge; and Robert Whittington, a secular priest, distinguished by various treatises on grammar, and his facility in Latin poetry, after complying with the customary demand of a century of verses, received the laurel in 1512, which was the last instance of a rhetorical degree at Oxford, according to the same authority. It is evident, therefore, that considerable attainments, and facility in their application, were necessary to the student who ventured to look for this distinction, although in some cases the conditions appear to have been more difficult than in others. But as it is tolerably clear that the act of graduating was usually, perhaps invariably, collateral with that of being laureated, and as Drayton never

graduated at Oxford, it may be inferred that, under whatever circumstances, he assumed the designation (and there is only one instance extant in which he appears to have done so), he was not entitled to it as a degree conferred in the ordinary way by the college. The want of certain information, however, upon all the points involved in the inquiry, still leaves the fact open to conjecture.

While the conditions of the laurel in the colleges seem to have been hard enough, there is good reason to conclude, that the early court laureates were not subjected to so severe a trial of skill, and that in some cases they were not even required to possess any qualification whatever for the office. The first instance on record of a poet regularly installed in the English court was in the reign of Henry III. He was one Henry de Avranches, a Frenchman, and, as Warton conjectures, probably wrote in French. He was called Master Henry the Versifier; and this title of versifier was the appellation for a long time employed to designate the functions which are now exercised under the more responsible name of poet-laureate. Master Henry, however, could really write verses, and deserved the distinction, and received the liberal sum of 100 shillings per annum for producing his annual tributes of French flattery. Some estimate may be formed of the rank held by the versifier, from the fact that the royal harper received at the same time forty shillings per annum, and a pipe of wine, together with an additional pipe of wine for his wife. The harper seems to have had quite as good an income as the versifier, and on the whole a much pleasanter place.* The first regular poet-laureate in our annals —

* Pipers were also entertained at the English court, and were paid, it would seem, even more munificently than either the poet or the harper. A musical MS. of the reign of James VI., which was bequeathed about twenty years ago to the faculty of advocates at Edinburgh, by Miss Elizabeth Skene, the last lineal descendant of the family of Skene of Hallyards, has recently been published, with an elaborate introductory inquiry illustrative of the music of Scotland, written by Mr. Dauney, in which some curious particulars relative to the ancient bagpipers will be found. Mr. Dauney attempts to prove that the bagpipe is an English rather than a

that is, the first person upon whom the title of laureate was conferred in lieu of that of versifier, he being in reality only the successor of the versifier — was John Kay, in the reign of Edward IV. Of this John Kay's poetical productions, not a single relic has descended to us; and whether he ever wrote any verses to entitle himself to the courtly honours or not is exceedingly doubtful. The presumption is that he did not, or could not, since the only composition by which he is known is a prize translation of a Latin history of the Siege of Rhodes. If he had ever written poetry, some contemporaneous evidence of the fact, or some fragments, might be expected to have come down to us along with this proof of his latinity.

The assumption of the laurel by Drayton in the copy of verses to which we have alluded, if, indeed, it was not inserted for him by some admiring friend, took place twenty-three years after the coronation; so that, however it may have found its way into print, it is not very likely, after all, to have been adopted from any intention of rivalling his majesty's poet. Drayton appears rather to have retired from all collisions or envious controversies of that kind with a commendable modesty; and in his dedication of the folio edition of the Owl to sir Walter Aston, in 1619, he expressly says that he leaves the laurel to those who may think it worth their while to look after it. The king's anger, however, made a deep

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Scotch instrument, and quotes, in proof, Shakspeare's allusion to the "drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe," and of "a Yorkshire bagpipe," and the "Miller" of Chaucer,

A bagpipe well couth he blowe and sowne;

and "Will Swane," "the meikle miller-man" in "Peblis to the Play,"

Giff I sall dance, have doune, lat se,
Blaw up the bagpyp than.

The pipers, he observes, who are mentioned in the lord high treasurer's accounts, seem uniformly to have been natives of England. Thus, 10th July, 1489, there is a payment of eight pounds eight shillings "to *Inglis pyparis* that com to the castel yet and playit to the king." Again, in 1505. there is another payment to "the *Inglis pipar* with the drone." See Ancient Scottish Melodies from a MS. of the reign of James VI. Edinburgh, 1838.

impression upon his mind; and, although he occasionally resents it in some of his pieces as an an act of injustice, it evidently took a greater effect upon him than a nature like his could express in sarcastic verse. During the few years immediately preceding his majesty's arrival in England, he published a variety of pieces; but, with the exception of the Owl, an allegorical poem, which was first printed in 1604, he does not appear for a long period subsequently to have published any thing, but to have contented his ambition by preparing for the press new editions of what he had formerly written. He went, probably, into retirement, devoting himself to study, and the preparation of those more elaborate poems, which he afterwards produced. But the dates of the first editions of several of his works cannot be accurately determined, and we are of necessity compelled to frame all such speculations upon a species of authority which is perpetually exposed to scepticism. That he ceased, however, to write for some time is evident enough from an appeal addressed to him by his friend, J. Davis of Hereford, who, in his Book of Epigrams, charges him not to forsake the muses.

In reference to the legends to which we have already alluded, Drayton was called by one of his contemporaries Tragædiographus; but the propriety of the appellation may reasonably be questioned. The subjects of these legends are drawn from history, each being illustrative of some practical moral in social or political life; and the plan on which they are constructed is imitated from the successful compositions of a nearly similar kind of Boccaccio and Lydgate, and of Sackville and his coadjutors in the Mirror of Magistrates. The stories are all of a most tragical cast, but they cannot be included amongst Drayton's best productions: they have the gloom of tragedy, but are wanting in elevation and vitality. These were followed by a collection of sonnets, the greater part of which, if not the entire, were written during the lifetime of Elizabeth. Of all Drayton's poems these are the least meritorious. His

genius was not adapted to so limited a form of verse, and could not produce fine thoughts within such narrow boundaries. Like certain birds which lose their songs in cages, Drayton's power forsook him in the restricted sonnet. His theory of the capability of the sonnet was confined to an artificial expression of his duty to his patrons. He took it to be good enough for that purpose, and perhaps preferred it as a medium of panegyric, because it was short, and saved him trouble on a subject where he could hardly have desired to run into any unnecessary length. In one place, he says to the countess of Bedford, that "she rained upon him her sweet showers of gold," and in another he tells his patron, that but for him his rhymes "had slept in sable night;" adding with a little touch of pride, as if in vindication of his friend's judgment and his own deserts, that he had borrowed no man's conceits. The manifest faults of these poems, however, may be sheltered under this excuse, that the sonnet had not yet taken root in our language, and Drayton was, of all men, the last who could have fulfilled its peculiar demands. Even Spenser had failed before him; and the highest standard that seems to have been been aimed at by any of the poets antecedent to Milton was that which celebrated the romantic raptures and verbal sensibility of Petrarch.* The solitary specimens here and there which deserve to be excepted from this general rule are too few to form a class in themselves. To the sonnets succeeded a collection of odes; and the whole of these productions, or most of them, were subsequently brought out in different editions in 1605, and 1610: but the most complete edition of Drayton's works, up to this period, which was published in his lifetime, appeared in 1619. In the mean time, he had completed and printed (1613) the first part of his Poly-olbion; the second part of which was finished in 1622, when he published the entire poem, consisting in the whole of thirty songs.

* See Life of Spenser, Literary and Scientific Men of Great Britain and Ireland, vol. ii.

Drayton might now be fairly considered to have taken a high and prominent place amongst contemporary poets, and was popularly ranked with Sydney and Daniel. We trace him through nearly all their works, either in direct allusions to his merits, or in verses addressed to them by him upon their new productions, and, according to the custom of the age, published along with them as certificates of their excellence. His companionship with the writers of the day is thus clearly established; so that while he lived in the circles of the great, he still kept up a constant intercourse with his literary friends. Of the scanty notices preserved in this way, but scattered over numerous volumes, a slight review will be sufficient to show how highly Drayton was estimated, as also who were his principal contemporaries and friends.

William Kidley, alias Pointer—of whom nothing more is known than that he was the son of John Kidley of Dartmouth, in Devonshire; that he was born in 1605, entered at Exeter College in 1624, and that he wrote a poem entitled Kidley's Hawkins, which is deposited in the British Museum, which was never printed, and which was first made known to the public by Mr. Bliss in his edition of the Athenæ Oxoniensis — thus speaks of Drayton, in an appeal to the muse for inspiration: —

"Dip but my pen within that sacred well,
Drunk almost dry by sweet-tongu'd Astrophell,
Or shew mee to this streame which did infuse
Such influence to Draiton's phœnix muse."

The Astrophell of this passage is sir Philip Sydney; and the poet's admiration of Drayton may be inferred from his being placed next in order, as well as associate in influence, with one of the most remarkable men of the age.

Sir John Beaumont, the brother of the dramatic poet, appears also to have been one of Drayton's junior intimates. He was the son of one of the justices of

the Common Pleas in the reign of queen Elizabeth, and was entered a gentleman commoner at Oxford in 1596, at the age of fourteen years. His earlier years are said to have been devoted to poetry, and the latter part of his life to more serious pursuits in the retirement of the country. After his death his poems were collected and published by his son (1629), with commendatory verses by several persons, and amongst the rest by Drayton. It is a singular circumstance that of more than twenty copies of this collection of poetry inspected by the editor of the Athenæ, every one wanted one leaf, pp. 181, 182, which had evidently been cut out. The presumption is that it contained some poem either of a reprehensible nature, or upon some forbidden subject.

Drayton also contributed a copy of laudatory stanzas to a translation from the Latin of A Manuduction to Theology, published by a celebrated theologian and preacher, Thomas Vicars, who was many years younger than himself, but for whom he appears to have maintained a strong friendship. That he possessed none of that jealousy which has too often darkened the private lives of men of letters, and which, indeed, it is difficult to reconcile with the sympathies of a true poet, is abundantly attested by the numerous occasions on which we find him coming forward to assist the efforts of his obscure contemporaries, either by commending their productions in introductory verses, thus giving them his *imprimatur*, or by urging them to cultivate their powers in the way which their genius appeared to point out as the most likely to insure success. In common with Ben Jonson, John Owen the epigrammatist, George Withers the puritanical satirist, and others, he encouraged the talents of Robert Hayman, a wit of the seventeenth century, who studied the municipal law at Lincoln's Inn; but who, falling into an acquaintance with the dramatists and poets, to whose society he was attracted by the congeniality of his taste, forsook the law to indulge the "idle" pursuits of

verse. Hayman did not live to vindicate the judgment of Drayton and his friends, having died at the age of forty-nine in Newfoundland, where he had been appointed governor of a plantation. He was one of those pleasant fellows who are brilliant in conversation, but whose wit expires in brief flashes upon paper. His collection of quodlibets and epigrams evince a sprightly fancy, but not much poetical skill.

Of such note was Drayton held, that the learned Selden did not think it unworthy of his labour to write and publish notes and illustrations of the first eighteen songs in the Poly-olbion, even before the second part of that work appeared, and, therefore, before it had acquired the extended fame which the poem, when entire, commanded. The position occupied by Drayton was evidently that of one whose reputation was so universally admitted, that his approval was considered a matter of great importance in all literary undertakings. It was the fashion in those times (a fashion that has been occasionally followed since, but not so frequently, in consequence, perhaps, of that growth of aristocratical sentiment that has so materially hurt the unity of the republic of literature,) to form collections of contributions from the most distinguished writers, and publish them under some fantastic or enigmatical title. In all the collections of this kind that have survived, or of which we have any record, the name of Michael Drayton is invariably discovered in the first rank. One of the most curious of these anthologies is a volume entitled Annalia Dubrensia, published in 1636, and containing a gathering of verses upon the yearly celebration of Mr. Robert Dover's Olympic Games upon Cotswold Hills. These games were originated by Robert Dover, an attorney of Barton-on-the-Heath, in Warwickshire, and continued by him without intermission for forty years, on a certain place on the Cotswold Hills, which he obtained permission from James I. to occupy for that purpose. The nobility and gentry used to come from great distances to be present at the games, which were always

directed in person by Dover, mounted and well accoutred, and exhibiting, no doubt, rather a humorous figure in a suit of the king's old clothes, with hat, feather, and ruff to match. The book in which these games are celebrated does not present much attraction, as may be supposed, in its poetical character, although Drayton, Ben Jonson, Shakerley Marmion, Thomas Heywood, Owen Feltham, and several others of minor repute, are amongst its authors; but it is a remarkable specimen of the peculiar taste by which such productions were distinguished. The name of the Cotswold games is inserted as a running title at the head of every page, and there is a rude broadly characteristic frontispiece, representing the various sports, such as men playing at cudgels, pitching the bar, leaping, wrestling, throwing the iron hammer, vaulting over the heads of men kneeling, standing on their hands, a perilous sort of leap-frog, handling the pike, &c.; also women dancing, and men hunting and coursing the hare with hounds and greyhounds, a castle built with boards on a rising ground, with guns firing, and the grand director, captain Dover, arrrayed in all his finery, galloping from place to place, with the liveliest expression of importance.

But by far the most memorable olio of verses belonging to Drayton's period is that prefixed by the facetious Tom Coryate, renowned amongst his friends as the "Odcombian legge-stretcher," to his famous book called Coryate's Crudities *, originally published in 1611. This work is so little known to the public at large, that some account of it and its author may not be unacceptable to the reader.

* This work was republished in 1776. The title of the first edition ran thus: "Crudities hastily gobbled up in five Months' Travels in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia, Helvetia, some Parts of High Germany, and the Netherlands." In the last edition it is somewhat enlarged, and called "Coryate's Crudities, reprinted from the edition of 1611; to which are now added his letters from India, &c., and extracts relating to him from various authors; being a more particular account of his travels (mostly on foot) in different parts of the globe, than any hitherto published. Together with his orations, character, death, &c., with copperplates. In three vols. 8vo. London, 1776."

Tom Coryate was born in the parsonage house at Odcombe (whence the Odcombian designation) in Somersetshire about the year 1577, went to Oxford at nineteen years of age, where he continued about three years, and then removing to London was received into the family of the prince of Wales. Here he met the leading wits, who, discovering that Tom was a man of extraordinary credulity, and of the most preposterous vanity mixed with an inexhaustible fund of good nature and good humour, speedily turned him into a butt for their jests and ridicule, which he submitted to with the most unsuspicious complaisance. The freedom and familiarity with which he was treated had the effect of elevating him in his own opinion to a level with his satirists; and from being the object of their sport, he easily persuaded himself into the belief that he was on an equality with them in genius and acquirements. His paramount passion was travelling; and such was the force of this desire, that, without knowing a word of any modern language except his own, he left England in 1608 to accomplish the route described on his title-page. Possessing an uncommon facility in the acquisition of languages, he rendered himself master in an incredibly short time of the various tongues of the countries through which he passed. Upon a subsequent occasion, during his progress through the East, he learned the Turkish, the Persian, and the Hindostanee; and so great was his proficiency in the last, that, happening to fall in with a scolding laundress, attached to the ambassador's household, a virago who had such a "gift of words" that she used to rail and vituperate from sunrise to sunset, he undertook to talk her down, and actually silenced her by eight o'clock in the morning, to the great wonder and mirth, says Anthony Wood, of those present. Upon his return to England, he published his Crudities; but not until he had obtained from his literary acquaintances copies of verses to the number of nearly sixty, which he prefixed to the book under the title of an Odcombiant Ban-

quet, and which, it is said, greatly promoted its sale. The principal contributors were sir John Harrington, Dudley Digges, afterwards master of the rolls, Richard Martin, recorder of London, Lawrence Whittaker, Inigo Jones, Richard Corbett (the bishop), Michael Drayton, John Donne, Christopher Brook, Hugh Holland (the traveller), Owen, Dr. Campian, Ben Jonson, &c. That Tom Coryate spared no pains in getting up this *Elogia* is evident; for his anxiety to appear with the labels of friendly critics upon him is broadly hinted at in some of the verses, especially in the following couplet by Digges:—

"Our author will not let me rest, he says,
Till I write somewhat in his labour's praise."

The truth was, Tom Coryate was an eccentric fellow, by no means wanting in observation and judgment, but so completely engrossed in his own vainglory, that he considered no trouble too great which procured him a shred of applause, even if it were dashed with irony. He seems to have run about with indefatigable eagerness to get verses from his literary friends for his Crudities; and although some of them must have declined at first, and others hesitated up to the last, endeavouring to put him off as well as they could with excuses, he was not to be refused; and so he collected a quantity of offerings, such as no man ever before or since was weak enough to publish in reference to himself. Some of the contributors, teased into compliance, took their revenge upon him by stealthy inuendoes or open ridicule, hoping either that the reader would understand they were not in earnest in commending so foolish an egotist, or that he, detecting their satire, would omit it from his book. But Tom Coryate printed them all, notwithstanding that the burlesque was as plain as words could make it. Sir John Harrington's verses may be taken as a specimen of the mocking humour that pervaded some of them:—

"Thou glorious goose that keep'st the capitol,
Afford one quill, that I may write one story yet,
Of this my new-come Odcombe friend Tom Coryet,
Whose praise so worthy wits and pens inroll,
As (with good cause) his custom is to glory it:
So far am I from judging his a sorry wit,
Above earth, sea, air, fire, I 'll it extoll
To Cinthia's sphere, the next beneath the stars,
Where his vast wit and courage so audacious,
Of equal worth in time of peace or wars,
(As Roland's erst) encumb'ring rooms capacious,
Lie stored, some in hogsheads, some in jars.
This makes the learned of late in foreign parts
Find Phœbus' face so full of wens and warts."

The author of the Crudities, however, must not be supposed to have been insensible to the sarcastic jocularity of his friends; for in his introduction he says, "I have here communicated that copious rhapsody of poems which my learned friends have bountifully bestowed upon me, wherein many of them are disposed to glance at me, with their free and merry jests, for which I desire thee (courteous reader) to suspend thy censure of me till thou hast read over my whole book." That Coryate possessed more shrewdness than his contemporaries gave him credit for, is tolerably evident from the very work upon which they poured out such a stream of ridicule. A chattering, bustling, vivacious, and foppish person rarely succeeds in impressing society with any qualities of a sterling kind that happen to lie hidden under an exterior of grimaces and literary coxcombry; and his acquaintances are apt to regard his book *a priori* as being as frivolous as himself. But posterity stands in a different relation to him. The book is emancipated from all extraneous influences — there is no image of vanity flitting about its leaves, and predisposing the reader to undervalue and despise it. Whatever is good in it is appreciated at its full value, and its absurdities are set down at their real amount, without deriving any exaggeration from personal characteristics. Tom Coryate was considered as a sort of buzzing fly by the wits, a

creature of a most contemptible measure of intellect — a reputation which he earned by the vanity and impertinence of his manners. There exists in the Bodleian Library a MS. copy of verses, obviously intended for the Crudities, in which he is compared to a monkey. These are the lines, which Coryate, however, had sense enough to exclude from his collection: —

In laudem libri et itineris primi Thome Coriati.

"As Eloquence vpon a trotting nagge
out-ambles Wisedom in a morris daunce,
or, as the waves doe over-flush the crag-
gie rocks of fortune on the shoares of Fraunce;

or, as your monkie, playing with his tayle,
shewes a fayr body, and berays a scholler,
so have you here the man and his travayle,
who had no leader, nor shall have a foll'or." *

Yet, in spite of all these silly attributes, which must have rendered him in private a mark for universal laughter, his Crudities discover an ardour in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the accumulation of matter, which would be irreconcilable with so much folly, were it not that he always betrays his want of judgment in the treatment of his subject, whenever he ventures beyond the confines of mere description. He compiles facts, such as they are, with the enthusiasm of a man who never gets tired of the object in view; but when he attempts to reason about them, his incapacity, shallowness, and egregious conceit, become apparent. The Crudities, as a work of travels in the 17th century, is every way a curiosity, and is entitled to no slight praise as being the greatest undertaking of that nature any Englishman up to that time had been courageous enough to embark in. To have visited Constantinople, and the court of the Great Mogul, to have run through Italy and High Germany, and to have seen things with his own eyes — such as the Italians using forks at dinner, — which had never been heard of before at home, were temptations enough to such a man as Tom Coryate.

* Athenæ Oxonienses, by Bliss.

The risk and trouble went for nothing in comparison with the advantages he acquired, as a traveller (with a traveller's privileges), over his untravelled contemporaries. There is no difficulty in imagining how he crowed, and exulted, and boasted, when he got back! What a confusion he must have created at the Mermaid in Bread Street, where the "worshipful fraternity of the sireniacal gentlemen," as he euphuistically calls them, used to meet on the first Friday in every month! How he must have made Ben Jonson cough, and John Chapman stare! But the Crudities, notwithstanding all this, are better than the guarantee of such parentage would lead the world to infer. "The wits of that age," says an acute critic, "all affected to turn Coryate's book into ridicule, but which, at least, is not so foolish as their verses."*

The end of poor Tom was tragical and melancholy enough, and made a sorry catastrophe to so farcical a life. Being at Mandoa, after accomplishing a long journey, as usual, on foot, he met with some of his countrymen, who, out of kindness, pressed him to partake of some sack, which they had brought with them from England; and Tom, who was habitually temperate, no sooner heard the name than he exclaimed, "Sack, sack! is there any such thing as sack? I pray you give me some sack." The moderate draught he took increased an illness with which he had been recently attacked, and he died in a few days afterwards in December, 1617. "Sic exit Coryatus!" says Terry, his friend and chronicler. "Hence he went off the stage, and so must all after him, how long soever their parts seem to be; for if one should go to the extremest part of the world east, another west, another north, and another south, they must all meet at last together in the field of bones, wherein our traveller hath now taken up his lodging, and where I leave him!"

Of all the poets of his own period, there is not one with whom Drayton has been so frequently compared, or with whom, probably, he held so close a friendship,

* Walpole — Anecdotes of Painting.

as Daniel. In some points of view the comparison is favourable to Drayton, in other points to Daniel; and on the whole, perhaps, it must be decided that Daniel had more tenderness and elegance, and Drayton more strength and variety. A satirist of the day denied that Daniel was a good poet, asserting that his excellence lay in prose: —

"His rhimes were smooth, his metres well did close;
But yet his matters better fitted prose."

But this surly criticism was counterbalanced by numerous panegyrics on his verse, the most memorable of which was by his friend Mr. Charles Fitz-Geoffry, who designates him "the Phœbus of our land:" —

"For, in my judgment, if the God of verse
In English would heroic deeds rehearse,
No language so expressive he could chuse,
As that of English Daniel's lofty muse." *

Samuel Daniel was the son of a music-seller, and was born in Taunton in 1562. He was entered at Oxford, but, like Drayton, left it without a degree, and, under the encouragement and patronage of the earl of Pembroke, dedicated himself to poetry and history. He subsequently became tutor to the lady Anne Clifford, and, upon the death of Spenser, succeeded to the office of poet-laureate to queen Elizabeth. In the following reign he was made gentleman extraordinary, and at a later period one of the grooms to the privy chamber to the queen-consort, who was a great admirer of his conversation and his writings. During this part of his life he rented a small house and garden in Old Street, "near London," but towards his decline he retired to a farm in Somersetshire, where he died in 1619. The advantages Daniel possessed were prudently used by him, as his works testify; for he obeyed the wishes of his patrons in all his undertakings, even attempted some compositions — especially his heroic poems and tragedies — at their instance, for which he was

* Biog. Brit.

altogether unqualified. His first work was a collection of fifty-seven sonnets, and those, written in the freshness of his feelings, are the most poetical of all his productions. They have much of the grace, the warmth, the imagery of youth in them. His pastorals and epistles are less touching, less true to nature, more artful, and consequently less impassioned. But the poem upon which he evidently desired to rest his fame, and which cost him many years in the composition, entitled the History of the Civil Wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, is one of those ponderous failures over which authors sometimes expend the most valuable part of their lives under a strange misconception of their capabilities. To turn into verse so lengthy a narrative as that of the wars of the Roses was a labour of enormous magnitude, and when completed it could not yield a commensurate triumph of skill. The subject was intrinsically ill adapted for the design, and Daniel has not redeemed it by any striking merits in the treatment. "It is a fraud upon the reader," says a judicious critic, "to hold it out as a poem, and it is a roundabout way to get at the facts of history."* Ben Jonson must surely have referred to this signal error of a gentle and amiable muse when he said that Daniel was not a poet; and it is to this prosaic and lumbering production must be ascribed the observation of a contemporary that Daniel was "*somewhat a flat.*" Daniel himself was keenly impressed with the loss of reputation he incurred by this poem, and all the more keenly because of the time it had consumed, and the hopes of fame he built upon its reception: feelings which he pathetically indicates when he says,—

But years have done this wrong,
To make me write too much and live too long!"

His sonnets, however, are alone sufficient to vindicate his claim to an honourable place amongst the English poets,

* Retrospective Review.

even were there not many beautiful passages strewn through his miscellaneous pieces. It is impossible to read the sonnets and not be impressed with the conviction that Daniel had Shakspeare's sonnets constantly in his mind during their composition. But whatever may be thought of him as a poet, his history of England (which he brought down only to the reign of Edward III.) is written with such judgment and perspicuity, that, it cannot be doubted, had he cultivated more extensively that department of study, he must have excelled all the writers of his time as an historian.

In glancing at Drayton's contemporaries, we in some degree surround him with the atmostphere in which he lived. The mere details of a life, unless they are full and closely interwoven with the public affairs or distinguished men of the age, fail to give an adequate portrait of the individual; he must be shown in his associations to be completely developed and understood. But this, which is essential in all cases, is nearly impossible in the instance of Drayton. The want of the requisite materials casts us upon such resources as are thrown up to the surface in the casual hints and allusions of occasional poems, epigrams, anecdotes, and dedications; and these, scanty as they are, must not always be relied upon, even presuming that we could draw any tangible inferences from them. We know that Drayton maintained an uninterrupted intercourse with the patrons of his youth; that he preserved to the last many valuable friendships, which he had formed throughout his life; and that he was intimate with most of the wits, dramatists, historians, and poets of his day, reckoning amongst his friends such men as Ben Jonson, Selden, Bishop Corbet, Sir John Harrington, Chapman, and Donne. But, living much apart from the scenes of their festivities, and rarely, as it would seem, frequenting the tavern clubs and roystering resorts where Beaumont and Fletcher, and their glorious party, used to meet, he does not appear so often in the memo-

rabilia of the times as many others who were less distinguished by their genius. His disposition inclined him to more tranquil and retired habits, of which we have an evidence in a cursory allusion to him that occurs in a comedy called the "Return from Parnassus; or the Scourge of Simony, written by a Divine of Cambridge, and acted by the Students of St. John's College in 1606." One of the interlocutors, speaking of the wits of the age, observes, —

"Drayton's sweet muse is like a sanguine die,
Able to ravish the rash gazer's eye;"

to which another replies, "However, he wants one true note of a poet of our times, and that is this — he cannot swagger it well in a tavern, or domineer in a hot-house."

The Poly-olbion must be considered as the chief production of this estimable man and true poet. We need not point out to the classical reader the complex application of the title, which, as already shown by Selden, signifies not only *very happy*, but expressly applies to Albion, which, according to some writers, is derived from ολϐιον, happy. The subject of the poem is a chorographical description of the rivers, mountains, vallies, woods, cities, and antiquities of England, interspersed with acccounts of the natural productions of the soil, and the employments of the people. These descriptions are relieved and heightened by a great variety of historical episodes, such as the conquest of the island by the Romans, the exploits of the early navigators, the coming of the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans, and particular events in the civil wars following upon the settlement of the throne. The original edition of the first part of the Poly-olbion was printed with a map before each song, representing the mountains, rivers, &c. allegorically by men and women, and a glaring frontispiece, with a full-length picture of prince Henry (to whom it was dedicated), in a belligerent and somewhat theatrical attitude, exercising his pike. The

second part was issued without any embellishments, probably on account of the expenses attending them.*

* To the great majority of English readers the Poly-olbion is, perhaps, as little known as the "Bokes" of Skelton, or Tusser's "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry." The lover of old poetry, who dwells in his solitary hours upon these antique rhymes is apt, no doubt, to exaggerate the popular indifference to them when he rarely meets any corresponding sympathy in society; but Drayton is too remarkable a poet in many points of view not to be more frequently referred to, if the acquaintance with him were as extended as he deserves. For the sake of those who may not have fallen upon the Poly-olbion, or who may have passed heedlessly over it, an extract from that poem is here subjoined. Pope says that Drayton was an imitator of Spenser; if so, it may have been in such passages as the following, when he describes the sea gods "swaggering in the Solent deep:"—

When as the pliant muse, with fair and even flight,
Betwixt her silver wings is wafted to the Wight;
That isle which jutting out into the sea so far,
Her offspring traineth up in exercise of war;
Those pirates to put back, that oft purloin her trade,
Or Spaniards or the French attempting to invade.
Of all the southern isles, she holds the highest place,
And ever more hath been the great'st in Britain's grace.
Not one of all her nymphs her soverain fav'reth thus,
Embraced in the arms of old Oceanus
For none of her account so near her bosom stand,
'Twixt Penwith's farthest point, and Goodwin's queachy sand,
Both for her seat and s[illegible] far before the other
Most justly may account Great Britain for her mother.
A finer fleece than hers not Lemster's self can boast,
Nor Newport for her mart, o'ermatched by any coast.
To these the gentle south, with kisses smooth and soft,
Doth in her bosom breathe, and seems to court her oft.
Besides her little rills, her inlands that do feed,
Which with their lavish stream do furnish every need;
And meads that with their fine soft grassy towels stand
To wipe away the drops and moisture from her hand;
And to the north, betwixt the Foreland and the firm,
She hath that narrow sea, which we the Solent term,
Where those rough ireful tides, as in her streights they meet,
With boist'rous shocks and wars each other rudely greet:
Which fiercely when they charge, and sadly make retreat,
Upon the bulwark't forts of Hurst and Calsheot beat,
Then to South-hampton run: which by her shores supply'd
(As Portsmouth by her strength doth villify their pride).
Both roads, that with their best may boldly hold their plea,
Near Plimmouth's self hath borne more braver ships than they;
That from their anchoring bays hath travelled to find
Large China's wealthy realms, and view'd the either Ind,
The pearly rich Peru; and with as prosperous fate
Have borne their full-spread sails upon the streams of Plate;
Whose pleasant harbours oft the seaman's hope renew,
To rigg his late craz'd bark, to spread a wanton clue;
Where they with lusty sack, and mirthful sailor's songs,
Defy their passed storms, and laugh at Neptune's wrongs:
The danger quite forgot wherein they were of late,
Who half so merry now as master and his mate?
And victualling again, with brave and manlike minds
To seaward cast their eyes, and pray for happy winds.
But partly by the floods sent thither from the shore
And islands that are set the bordering coast before;

Bishop Nicholson observes, that the Poly-olbion "affords a much truer account of this kingdom, and the

As one amongst the rest, a brave and lusty dame
Call'd Portsey, whence that bay of Portsmouth hath her name;
By her, two little isles, her handmaids (which compar'd
With those within the Pool, for deftness not outdar'd)
The greater Haling hight; and fairest tho' by much,
Yet Thorney very well, but somewhat rough in touch:
Whose beauties far and near, divulged by report,
And by the Tritons told in mighty Neptune's court,
Old Proteus hath been known to leave his finny herd,
And in their sight to spunge his foam-bespawled beard.
The sea-gods, which about the watery kingdom keep,
Have often for their sakes abandoned the deep;
That Thetis many a time to Neptune hath complain'd,
How for these wanton nymphs her ladies were disdain'd:
And there arose such riot th' unruly rout among,
That soon the noise thereof through all the ocean rung.

A few of these lines are marked in italics to direct more particular attention to their peculiar beauty, and the skilful structure of the versification, which, notwithstanding the general unfitness of the Alexandrine for such an arduous service in our language, and the great difficulty of diminishing the monotony of its swinging sound, is, in Drayton's hands, full of variety, and unexpected transitions of melody. But another specimen of the Poly-olbion is necessary to the formation of a just estimate of its most characteristic merit — its geographical delineations. The following lines describe with great accuracy the boundaries and main features of Cheshire:—

O! thou thrice-happy shire, confined so to be
'Twixt two so famous floods, as Mersey is, and Dee.
Thy Dee upon the west from Wales doth thee divide;
Thy Mersey on the north from Lancastrian side,
Thy natural sister-shire; and link't unto thee so,
That Lancashire along with Cheshire still doth go.
And to'ards the Derbian Peak, and Moreland (which do draw
More mountainous and wild) the high-crown'd Shutlingslaw
And Molsop be thy mounds, with those proud hills whence rove
The lovely sister brooks, the silvery Dane and Dove;
Clear Dove, that makes to Trent; the other to the west,
But, in that famous town, most happy of the rest
(From which thou tak'st thy name), fair Chester, call'd of old
Carlegion; whilst proud Rome her conquests here did hold,
Of those her legions known the faithful station then,
So stoutly held to tack by those near North-Wales men;
Yet by her own right name had rather called be,
As her the Britons term'd, the fortress upon Dee,
Than vainly she would seem a miracle to stand,
Th' imaginary work of some huge giant's hand:
Which if such ever were, tradition tells not who.

Having shown so much of the Poly-olbion, it becomes a point of conscience to show Drayton in other and more familiar measures. His ballad of Dowsabel has always been a favourite with his readers, although, as has been well observed, nobody can precisely explain why. The whole consists in the adventure of a knight's daughter who goes out to gather may, and sees a shepherd sitting and playing on a bank, and falls in love with him. Her beauty in turn captivates the shepherd, and after a brief parley she plights her troth to him. The following is the description of the appearance of the happy lover: —

dominion of Wales, than could well be expected from the pen of a poet;" and it must be admitted that few

---

The shepherd wore a sheep-gray cloak,
Which was of the finest lock
That could be cut with sheer.
His mittens were of banzon's skin,
His cockers of cordewin,
His hood of miniver.
His awl and linzel in a thong,
His tar-box on his broad belt hung,
His breech of Cointree blue.
Full crisp and curled were his locks,
His brows as white as Albion rocks,
So like a lover true.
And piping still he spent the day,
So merry as the popinjay,
Which liked Dowsabel:
That would she ought, or would she nought,
This lad would never from her thought,
She in love-longing fell.

The Nymphidia is probably that poem of Drayton's which is destined to survive the longest, when revolving fashions shall have obliterated all taste for the exploded manners touched upon in Dowsabel, and rendered the quaint texture of the Poly-olbion obsolete. The sportive grace of the Nymphidia will be as fresh a century hence as it is now, and must always be read with pleasure even when its diction shall have become antiquated. The description of the architecture of Oberon's palace, has much of the fancy and brilliancy of the Rape of the Lock.

This palace standeth in the air,
By necromancy placed there,
That it no tempests need to fear
Which way soe'er it blow it.
And somewhat southward tow'rd the noon,
Whence lies a way up to the moon,
And thence the fairy can as soon
Pass to the earth below it.

The walls of spiders' legs are made,
Well morticed and finely laid,
He was the master of his trade,
It curiously that builded:
The windows of the eyes of cats,
And for the roof, instead of slats,
Is cover'd with the skins of bats,
With moonshine that are gilded.

Hence Oberon, him sport to make,
(Their rest when weary mortals take,
And none but only fairies wake)
Decendeth for his pleasure:
And Mab, his merry queen, by night
Bestrides young folks that lie upright,
(In elder times the mare that hight,)
Which plagues them out of measure.

Hence shadows, seeming idle shapes,
Of little frisking elves and apes,
To earth do make their wanton scapes,

poets could have sustained such a subject at such a length, and in such a measure (the Alexandrine being employed invariably throughout) with so much interest,

---

As hope of pastime hastes them :
Which maids think on the earth they see,
When fires well-near consumed be,
There dancing hayes by two and three,
Just as their fancy casts them.

These make our girls their slutt'ry rue,
By pinching them both black and blue,
And put a penny in their shoe,
The house for cleanly sweeping.
And in their courses make that round,
In meadows and in marshes found,
Of them so call'd the Fairy-ground,
Of which they have the keeping.

The gallant Knight Pigwiggen, who makes love to queen Mab (whose departure in her chariot for a secret assignation is an exquisite bit of painting), is a hero of the true fairy and moonshine class. His defiance to Oberon (whom he has wronged on the tenderest point), and his preparations for the field, if needs be, are most exquisite scraps of burlesque.

And quickly arms him for the field,
A little cockle-shell his shield,
Which he could very bravely wield,
Yet could it not be pierced :
His spear a bent, both stiff and strong,
And well near of two inches long,
The pile was of a horse-fly's tongue,
Whose sharpness naught reversed.

And puts him on a coat of mail,
Which was of a fishe's scale
That when his foe should him assail,
No point should be prevailing.
His rapier was a hornet's sting,
It was a very dangerous thing ;
For if he chanced to hurt the king,
It would be long in healing.

His helmet was a beetle's head,
Most horrible and full of dread,
That able was to strike one dead,
Yet it did well become him :
And for a plume, a horse's hair,
Which being tossed by the air,
Had force to strike his foe with fear,
And turn his weapon from him.

Himself he on an earwig set,
Yet scarce he on his back could get,
So oft and high he did curvet,
Ere he himself could settle :
He made him turn, and stop, and bound,
To gallop, and to trot the round,
He scarce could stand on any ground,
He was so full of mettle.

spirit, and beauty. To modern readers the poem must be more or less tedious, on account of the enumeration of names and places with which a part of it is occupied, especially as the majority of its pictures of towns and scenery, castles, streams, and heaths, true when they were written, have ceased to be so. The increase of population, and the corresponding extension of manufactures, the intersection of countless new roads, the establishment of towns where none existed before, and the growth into cities of what were then only villages, the cutting down of forests, and the general transformation of the pastoral aspect of the country into a surface of crowded labour, filling the secluded and silent places with the din and tumult of industry, must deprive Drayton's simple and faithful piece of poetical geography of much of its charms for some readers, and of all its merits with others. But out of this very objection—if it be one—its literalness and antiquity, springs its most essential claim upon the regards of posterity. It describes England as she was in the beginning of the 17th century, tracking her waters on their courses, and displaying with panoramic accuracy the whole face of the land before it had been scarred and disfigured by the hands of man in a more advanced stage of human wants and expedients. It brings before us poetical and sylvan England—the "bossy dells" and the "green lanes of youth and love"—the forest nooks of Robin Hood and his merry men—the patches of untilled earth that slept at the base of the mountains, unconscious of ploughs and steam engines—the low and shadowy castles of our common ancestry—the chase—the woodland—the "scantling brooks"—and "kissing trees:" it brings these sights before us, contrasted with the England of the mechanical arts, which, like necromancers, have passed over the island, and changed all things to their need. Whoever looks for exquisite turns of sentiment in the Poly-olbion will be disappointed; and must be content with its rare pastoral truthfulness, and make up his mind to endure a little monotony in matters of fact

for the sake of the sweet spirit of homage which it renders to nature.

The Nymphidia, or Court of Fairies, exhibits Drayton's powers in a very different order of poetry. It has been pronounced to be a "masterpiece in the burlesque kind," and, although such poets as Ariosto and Spenser have somewhat spoiled us for enjoying burlesques of this description, the humour of the Nymphidia is not to be resisted. Perhaps it is deficient in spirituality, and the reader may miss the airy and sportive qualities which he is accustomed to look for in such pieces; but the exuberant fancy that floats through the verses, and the relishing hilarity of the tiny actors in their romp of *equivoque,* can never fail to delight and entertain. Mr. Southey gives this poem and the Poly-olbion in his Specimens of the English Poets, as examples of Drayton's poetry.*

Of the closing years of Drayton's life no record has been preserved. Nothing more is known but that he died in 1631, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, where a handsome table monument of blue marble, adorned with his effigies *in busto,* were erected over his grave, it is said by the countess of Dorset. The following epitaph is inscribed upon the stone, and has been variously attributed to Quarles and to Ben Jonson, but was probably written by the latter: —

"Doe, pious marble, let thy readers know
What they, and what their children owe
To Drayton's name; whose sacred dust
We recommend unto thy trust:
Protect his memory, and preserve his story,
Remain a lasting monument of his glory:
And when thy ruins shall disclaime
To be the treasurer of his name,
His name, that cannot fade, shall be
An everlasting monument to thee."

* Select Works of the British Poets from Chaucer to Jonson, with Biographical Sketches by Robert Southey, Esq., LL.D. 1831.

"Drayton," says Dr. Southey, "took for himself a most fantastic coat of arms,—Pegasus rampant in a shield azure gutty d'eau from Helicon, with the cap of Mercury for a crest, amid sunbeams proper." I do not know upon what authority this statement is founded; but the absurd conceit that it attributes to Drayton, is singularly inconsistent with the tone of his writings, which were remarkably free from affectation, and with the character universally ascribed to him by his contemporaries, which was that of a plain and sedate man. I cannot better conclude than in the words of Francis Meres, a divine distinguished by the morality of his life and the excellence of his poetry, who, in the Palladis Tamia, gives us this brief but emphatic sketch of his friend, which, if true (and of its truth there cannot exist any rational doubt), must go some way towards suggesting the probability that the story of the coat of arms is to be received only as a jest thrown out in the licence of some whimsical humour. "Michael Drayton," says old Meres, "among scholars, soldiers, poets, and all sorts of people, is helde for a man of virtuous disposition, honest conversation, and well-governed carriage, which is almost miraculous among good wits in these declining and corrupt times." It is some comfort to us in our day, that the age of Donne and Selden and Ben Jonson, was held by some who lived in it to be a declining age.

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

[1618—1667.]

MORE fortunate than the majority of the poets of the seventeenth century, Cowley was preserved from oblivion by the friendly zeal of a biographer who was well qualified to appreciate his merits, and who enjoyed all the advantages of a long and intimate intercourse with him. That biographer was the accomplished Dr. Sprat, to whose care Cowley bequeathed his printed works and manuscript papers. In the year following the death of the poet, Dr. Sprat published "An Account of the Life of Mr. Abraham Cowley," addressed to Mart. Clifford, and prefixed to the book De Plantis, lib. 6. This account is certainly not to be regarded as a minute biography, and gives us, as Dr. Johnson observes, "the character, not the life of Cowley;" but it is extremely valuable as a personal memorial and its facts, although they are scanty, are entitled to be received with implicit credit.* The circumstantial deficiencies of Dr. Sprat's oratorical narrative are in a great measure supplied by Anthony à Wood in the Fasti Oxonienses, and since the

* Dr. Thomas Sprat, was the son of a minister in Devonshire, where he was born in the year 1635, and at the age of sixteen was entered as a commoner in Wadham college, Oxford, of which he subsequently became a fellow. After the restoration he entered the church, became a fellow of the royal society, (of which he wrote a very curious history,) was successively chaplain to the duke of Buckingham, and to the king in ordinary, prebendary of Westminster, rector of St. Margaret's, prebendary of Windsor, dean of Westminster, bishop of Rochester, clerk of the closet to the king, and finally a commissioner for ecclesiastical affairs. He was a man of considerable erudition, an elegant writer, a powerful preacher, and a wit,—to which last recommendation, perhaps, he was chiefly indebted for his good fortune. Immediately after the appearance of his account of Cowley's life, he was assailed by the versatile and restless pen of Edmund Elys, for what that writer called his "Apology for the lascivious and profane verses" of Mr Abraham Cowley. But Elys was a zealot, and, it would appear, notwithstanding the vast catalogue of his productions, a person of weak judgment, and of a hasty temper, which made the defects of his understanding the more apparent.

publication of that work, several diaries, and autobiographical remains, illustrative of the time in which Cowley lived, have appeared; so that, on the whole, the materials for this biography, if not as ample as could be desired, are at least sufficiently full to leave no very important point in obscurity or doubt.

Abraham Cowley was born in Fleet-street, near the end of Chancery-lane, in 1618. His father was a grocer. Dr. Sprat, whose successes at court may probably have inspired him with some false and vulgar notions on the subject, evades the acknowledgment of the humble origin of his friend, as if there were some discredit in it, and describes his father, under the loose designation of a citizen. The fact, however, for all it is worth, rests upon very good authority. The omission of the poet's baptism in the register of St. Dunstan's parish, has suggested the inference, that his father was a sectarian *; but be that as it may, his death, before the birth of his son, removed him from all participation in the education of the future glory of his name. The care of tending the youth of Cowley devolved upon his mother, a woman of exemplary virtue, whose solicitude for the welfare of her charge was repaid by the moral purity of his life, and the gratitude with which he always acknowledged her maternal tenderness, and judicious counsels. Through the interest of her friends, she procured him a scholarship at Westminster, when he was fifteen years of age.

The genius of Cowley was early developed in a collection of poems, some of which were written in his tenth year, and all of which were published in the year he entered Westminster. † The precocity of mere invention, of an unregulated fancy, or even of some skill and facility in versification, must not, perhaps, be pointed out as marvellous, or rare phenomena, in the

* Dr. Johnson.

† The volume was entitled "Poetic Blossoms." Dr. Sprat falls into the mistake of attributing this publication to the thirteenth year of Cowley's age, which error (originating in the date affixed to the portrait in the title page), is adopted by Dr. Johnson.—See Wood. Biog. Brit.

intellectual world. Verse is usually the first sport of creative minds; and, if the sterner judgment of maturer years, had not, in the great majority of instances, consigned such productions to oblivion, concealing in fastidious manhood, as a foible, the spiritual enthusiasm of youth, it is not unlikely that we should find, amongst the many whose early dreams of passion or of idleness took the seducing shapes of verse, some of the gravest statesmen and philosophers. But although such is the truth, could it be traced, or were great men great enough to confess it, the power discovered by Cowley in his boyhood would still remain a matter of wonder. The subjects upon which some of these poems were written - such as Pyramus and Thisbe, Antonius and Melida, the Elegy on the Death of Lord Carleton, and the Dream of Elysium, — are, in the feelings they describe, and the elements of nature that enter into their treatment, beyond the sympathies, and certainly out of the range of the experience of a boy. Not alone is the language clear, appropriate, and fluent, and the rythmical construction tolerably melodious, but the thoughts are elevated, frequently profound, and always above the ordinary grasp of youth. If it be not surprising that Cowley wrote verse at ten or twelve years of age, it is at least worthy of admiration that he wrote so well, and with such an instinctive comprehension of human affairs.

The mind that was thus premature in its labours, spurned, as might almost have been expected, the ordinary restraints of scholastic routine. Cowley seemed to possess an intuitive knowledge of the art of composition, the uses, the difficulties, and the properties of language. He abhorred the formulæ of elementary studies, or, at all events, exhibited great reluctance in acquiring them. While he thoroughly understood the principles which the rules of grammar were designed to enforce, he never could conquer his aversion to the rules themselves. That he had the true faith, his works indisputably prove, although, like other enthusiasts, he could

not always give a satisfactory reason for it. He informs us, in speaking of his school days, that he was "such an enemy to all constraint, that his master never could prevail on him to learn the rules without book." Dr. Sprat, referring to this circumstance, interprets it in a way that is neither true nor philosophical. He says, that "he (Cowley) had this defect in his memory at that time, that his teachers never could bring it to retain the ordinary rules of grammar."

To ascribe to a defect of memory, that which Cowley himself places to the account of his repugnance to constraint, is indeed, what Dr. Johnson defines to be an amplification of a commodious incident. One reason why Cowley could not, or would not, learn the rules of grammar was, because he did not want them; another reason was, because he was filled with an irrepressible love of liberty, and could not endure any unreasonable or unnecessary tasks, or such at least as seemed to him so. We have a striking proof of this feeling in his celebrated discourses on Liberty, Solitude, and Obscurity, in which he carries that predominant passion of his mind so far, as, for the sake of its indulgence, to prefer an inviolable retirement, to the comparative slavery of fame.

This sentiment early took possession of Cowley's mind, if his juvenile poems may be received as testimony of something more than the mere adoption of a favourite theory of the poets. In an ode, written when he was only thirteen years old, he declares for a cottage in preference to a palace, repudiates luxuries, exhibits a most commendable prudence in the choice of friends, desires to occupy his days with books, not business, and his nights with sleep, "as undisturbed as death;" expresses his ambition to be honoured for good not great deeds, observing that "the unknown are better than ill known;" and pictures as the ultimate object of his wishes a close literary seclusion which "Horace might envy in his sabine field." Referring to this poem many years afterwards, he adopts all these sentiments, re-

marking, however, that he had evidently been reading Horace when he wrote them, and that it was, perhaps, the immature and immoderate love of the poets which stamped first, or rather engraved the characters in him. "They were," he observes, "like letters cut in the bark of a young tree, which with the tree still grows proportionably."* The reader need not be reminded of Pope's Ode to Solitude, written at twelve years of age, in which a similar course of imaginary happiness is delineated with equal sobriety of expression. Horace is, probably, to a certain extent, responsible for both.

The circumstance that originally led Cowley to cultivate poetry is very touchingly related by himself and affords one amongst numberless illustrations of the influence which great poets exercise upon the spirit of their own and succeeding ages. "I believe," says Cowley in his essay on himself, "I can tell the particular little chance that filled my head first with such chimes of verses, as have never since left ringing there; for I remember when I began to read, and take some pleasure in it, there was wont to lie in my mother's parlour (I know not by what accident, for she herself never read any book but of devotion), that there was wont to lie Spenser's works: this I happened to fall upon, and was infinitely delighted with the stories of the knights, and giants, and monsters, and brave houses, which I found every where (though my understanding had little to do with all this) and by degrees with the tinkling of the rhymes and dance of the numbers, so that I think I had read them all over before I was twelve years old," &c. It is curious that drinking in his first inspiration from the works of the most romantic and descriptive of our English poets, he adopted as his model the least imaginative and most metaphysical amongst his immediate predecessors.

While he was at Westminster school, he wrote a

* Paine employs this figure in reference to the progress of opinion in communities.

comedy called "Love's Riddle;" it is purely of the pastoral kind, and is only remarkable as a deviation into a style for which neither his tastes nor his habits of thinking were qualified. He inscribed it in a copy of verses to sir Kenelm Digby, whom he apostrophises in a string of conceits, quaintly adding that, if it pleased his patron's taste,

"His muse will say,
The birch, which crown'd her then, is grown a bay."

Langbaine says that this comedy was originally printed in the Poetical Blossoms*, but this is a mistake; it was not published until 1638.

In 1636 Cowley was a candidate at Westminster for election to Trinity College, Cambridge, but failed. This discomfiture, however, did not prevent him from making his way to the university, of which he was elected a scholar in the same year. His collegiate progress more than fulfilled the dazzling promise of his boyhood. He excelled all his contemporaries in the elegance and philosophical acuteness of his exercises, and rapidly acquired a distinction which surrounded him with the esteem and admiration of his associates. It was during this interval that he laid the foundation of his greatest works, especially the Davideis, a production exhibiting an extent of inquiry and profound study that has rarely been brought to bear even upon poems of greater magnitude. While he was at Cambridge he published (1638) Love's Riddle, and a Latin comedy, entitled Naufragium Joculare, or the Merry Shipwreck, which, although by no means a strictly classical composition, was honoured by a representation at the university by the members of Trinity College. Subsequently, upon the occasion of prince Charles visiting Cambridge on his way to York, at the commencement of the civil war, Cowley undertook to prepare a comedy to be acted before his royal highness. This piece, called the Guardian, was written and performed in so short a space of time, that Cowley tells us it was neither made nor acted, but

* Account of the English Dramatic Poets, 1691.

rough-drawn only and repeated. He was so sensibly impressed with the disadvantages under which the comedy was produced, that he felt it necessary to propitiate the prince's favour by alluding to the circumstances in the prologue. The dilemma and the apology are happily expressed in the following lines:—

> "Accept our hasty zeal; a thing that's play'd
> E'er 't is a play, and acted e'er 't is made.
> Our ignorance, but our duty too we show;
> I would all ignorant people wou'd do so!
> At other times expect our wit and art,
> This comedy is acted by the heart."

And in the epilogue he again alludes in the same epigrammatic way to the probable fate of the play, suggesting that

> "Though it shou'd fall beneath your mortal scorn
> Scarce cou'd it die more quickly than 't was born."

This piece was afterwards printed without the consent or knowledge of the author during his absence from England,—a circumstance of which he complains with some justice. Notwithstanding the imperfections of a comedy thus hastily written and surreptitiously published, it was occasionally acted with success by the companies of players who, during the suppression of the theatres, ventured at intervals to attempt the stealthy resuscitation of their art.

The time was now approaching when it was difficult if not impossible for men so distinguished and prominent as Cowley, to preserve a political neutrality even in tranquil cloisters and under the studious discipline of a college. He had already taken out his degree as master of arts, and become a mark for the hostility of the Puritans, and along with others, was finally ejected from the University in 1643. It does not appear that previously to this occurrence, he gave any public proofs of his attachment to the royal cause, unless his share in the reception afforded to the prince could be construed into an overt act of loyalty: but

there can be no doubt that his exclusion from the college was justified to the rigid consciences of the visitors by the general tendency of his avowed opinions. That Cowley had early determined as to which side he ought to take in the ruinous strife which was convulsing the kingdom is highly probable; and if he had not yet betrayed in his writings that uncompromising zeal on behalf of the Stuarts which he infused into his subsequent productions (especially that bitter invective against the Protector which he flung upon the grave of the commonwealth), it is likely that he made no secret in conversation of convictions that were so deeply impressed on his mind. Upon leaving Cambridge, he took shelter at St. John's College, Oxford, where he continued to prosecute his studies with his habitual industry. His political feelings now took an affirmative shape, and he published a satire entitled the Puritan and the Papist, [illegible] which he gave vent both to his revenge and his [illegible] the throne. Nor was he satisfied with the bare expression of his attachment to the royalists, but engaged actively in their cause, and was said to have been present in several of the king's journeys and expeditions. The energy he exhibited on those occasions ingratiated him in the favour of the principal persons who were in the immediate confidence of the sovereign, particularly lord Falkland, who admitted the poet to the closest terms of friendship.

The visitations at Oxford now became as frequent and as harassing as they had previously been at Cambridge; and the commissioners appointed by the parliament, exhibited even a stronger desire to act with harshness to the recusant or suspected members of the former university, in consequence of their known adherence to the cavaliers. Their mode of proceeding was to install themselves in a chamber in one of the colleges, and cite before them such of the fellows or scholars as they thought proper, and interrogate them on any matters that were likely to elicit their private opinions; but the direct point upon which their expulsion depended,

was their implicit obedience to the authority of the parliament. Anthony à Wood, in his autobiography, informs us that the visitors having sat several times in the lodgings of sir Nathaniel Brent, warden of Merton College, in 1647, to little purpose, they proceeded in the following year with very great rigour, to effect the ruin of the university. "The members of every college," he adds, "were all summoned to appeare on a certaine day, and sometimes two or three colleges or more appeared in one day, and if they did not give a positive answer, whether they would submit to them and their visitation as appointed by parliament, they were forthwith ejected." Wood underwent this ordeal himself, and describes it in these terms:—"Friday, (May 12.) the members of Merton College appear'd, and when A. W. was call'd in (for the members were called in one by one), he was asked this question by one of the visitors,—'Will you submit to the authority of parliament in this visitation?' to which he gave this answer, and wrot [it] downe on a paper lying on the table, as he was directed:—'I do not understand the business, and therefore I am not able to give a direct answer.'"* This evasion would have been fatal to Wood but for the intercession of his mother with the warden, through whose friendly offices he was "connived at and kept in his place, otherwise he had infallibly," says the old chronicler, "gone to the pot." The forward part taken by Cowley in the civil wars, rendered him especially obnoxious to the visitors, and he was accordingly obliged to abandon his place, just before the university was given up for the use of the parliament. In this emergency he accompanied the queen-mother to Paris, where making the acquaintance of Dr. Stephen Goffe, a brother of the orator, he procured through that gentleman's interest the appointment of secretary to lord Jermyn, afterwards earl of St.

* Athen. Oxon., by Bliss, vol. i. p. xv.

Alban's*, and was so much esteemed by his new patron as to obtain from him a promise of the mastership of the Savoy Hospital, a situation, however, which was never conferred on him, notwithstanding that he was favoured in his expectations by both Charles I. and Charles II.

In this office, and constantly engaged in the affairs of the king, Cowley was employed for ten years. The only work he published during this period, was a collection of love poems entitled "The Mistress," amorous ditties written in the fashion of the times while he was residing at college, and printed shortly after he entered upon his secretaryship. Feeling, perhaps, that some apology was necessary for the utterance of such light measures at a period, and under circumstances which required the exclusive exercise of graver faculties, he undertook in his preface to vindicate that description of poetry, upon the ground that sooner or later all poets must pass the ordeal of love, "like some Mahometan monks, that are bound by their order, once at least in their life, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca," deprecating at the same time that sort of criticism which would confound the general character of the poet with the tendency or excesses of his amatory vein. Dr. Sprat follows the same track of excuse and vindication, urging as a reason why so many "love-verses" appear in Cowley's works, that they were written in his youth, and insisting seriously upon the advantage of allowing the mind to exercise itself on subjects appropriate to its seasons, and with which at the time it happens to be most conversant. Now all these elaborate apologies for writing upon love, are quite beside the real question upon which alone the world could be supposed to be interested. A poet might as well excuse

* Dr. Sprat says that Cowley was indebted for this piece of good fortune to Mr. John Harvey, brother of his friend Mr. William Harvey, whose friendship he has commemorated in some beautiful lines, and to whose memory he consecrated a very affecting epitaph. But we prefer the authority of Wood, which is more circumstantial.

himself for the employment of language to express his emotions, as for the expression of his emotions in language; and of all emotions that which Cowley attempted a defence of, least required it. The question is how much of nature or truth is there to be found in the poems? Are they mere abstractions or affectations of the passion, or do they present a just image of its fluctuating influences? Some doubts of this kind were probably passing through Cowley's mind when he devised the expedient of directing attention into a different channel. He was sufficiently conscious of the lack of genuine feeling in his verses, and knew that they owed whatever excellence is in them to his skill and not to his sensibility. It was the prevailing taste of the day that inspired him, and not the eyes of fascinating beauties. He wrote about love because it was expected of him, and created mistresses as fast as he coined rhymes. Petrarch had set the example, and Spenser had followed it. Cowley could do no less, and seems even to have thought that it was incumbent on him to feign the distresses of the lover whether he felt them or not. "Poets," he observes, "are scarce thought freemen of their company, without paying some duties, and *obliging* themselves to be true to love." Here is the solution of the mystery. The formal ingenuity and clipped ecstacies of his love poems show how largely they were indebted to his invention (working too in the solitude of a college), and how little to his heart. "Whatever," says Barnes, "he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion." *

His labours in the royal cause were of a varied and confidential nature. They occupied him constantly, and frequently obliged him to take journeys of some danger in those days into Jersey, Scotland, Flanders, Holland, and elsewhere, and he was the principal agent in the cor-

* Barnesii Anacreontem, quoted by Dr. Johnson.

respondence between the king and queen, cyphering and decyphering their letters with his own hand.* His own correspondence upon public affairs during this busy interval was also troublesome and incessant, and such of his letters as have been preserved, particularly some which he addressed to the earl of Arlington †, are remarkable for directness, perspicuity, and sagacity. In all papers of this description, he appears to have discovered great aptitude for business, and to have freed himself completely from all those restraints of style, and temptations to extraneous embellishments, which the habit of cultivating poetry might be supposed to have engendered. But some changes having taken place in the disposition of the king's personal affairs, these private duties passed into other hands, and it was considered advisable in 1656, to send Cowley to England for the purpose of secretly communicating with the friends of the exiles.

Shortly after his arrival in London, he collected all his poems, and published them in a new edition, consisting of four parts: — Miscellanies, the Mistress, Pindaric odes, and the Davideis, a sacred poem of the troubles of David. As this publication embraced the most memorable of his works, it suggests a proper occasion to turn from his life to his poetry, and the peculiar school to which he belonged, and of which he was the most distinguished ornament.

If the final test of a poet's excellence be the duration of his works in the affectionate regards of posterity, it must be admitted that the claims of Cowley, and others of his class, are not of the highest order. They have long since lost their popularity, and the few amongst whom they are still cherished, render but a conditional allegiance to their genius. The reason of this, however, is not because they were not poets in the exact sense of the term, but because they mixed up with what was beautiful and true much that was fantastical and false.

* Biog. Brit.

† Preserved by Brown in the Miscellanea Aulica.

They were perpetually going out of their way in search of the extravagant and the uncommon, and were never content, when they got hold of a natural image, to treat it naturally, as if they believed that it was necessary to embellish or disguise nature herself to make her agreeable and attractive. They had no conception of the universality and permanence of nature, and almost invariably expressed themselves as if they had discovered a train of existences and associations independent of the living world, which it became their province, as well as their delight, to explore throughout its remotest links. Thus dwelling in an artificial region of thought and fancy, they produced a species of double-natured poetry, which has been conventionally, but, perhaps, not very felicitously, designated the metaphysical.

Donne, who lived in the age which produced Shakspeare, and the great dramatists, Sydney, Raleigh, Herbert, Spenser, and a crowd of other distinguished men, was the patriarch of this class of poets. To profound and extensive erudition, he united a subtle intellect, and a vivid imagination; but these advantages, which, otherwise employed, or subjugated by a just taste, would have been of inestimable value, only had the effect of infusing an air of supreme affectation into his poetry, and diverting his genius into tangled labyrinths in pursuit of chimeras and phantoms, disdainful of the simple truths that lay close at hand. The art of clustering an enormous variety of illustrations together, — of heaping up a fatiguing quantity of distant and startling analogies, — of detecting the invisible particles of which all objects were composed, which required apparently the most painful search to find, and which were useless for all moral and poetical purposes when found, — of hunting down a thought, and then anatomising it, until in the lengthened process the original form was utterly annihilated, and its application forgotten, — of following out the finest threads of suggestions which could be drawn from the web and woof of a given texture, until the design was lost at a thou-

sand vanishing points,—of exhibiting a perverse ingenuity in bandying a subject, like a shuttlecock, from hand to hand, and then, in a fit of caprice or weariness, suffering it to fall to the ground,—and of lavishing alike upon the meanest or most exalted theme, all the flowers of wit or stores of learning which genius and inexhaustible resources of knowledge could command—seems to have constituted the aim and triumph of the metaphysical poets. Yet, in the midst of this wilderness of deformities and faults, there is such a luxuriant growth of fancy, and there are so many detached beauties of the most exquisite cast, that while we are suspended in wonder at the marvellous heresies and obscurities to which these writers committed themselves, we cannot withhold our admiration of those transcendent passages in which they open to us glimpses of an elysium of poetry which none but themselves were fitted to penetrate. That the hyperbolical turn of such poems, considered entire, should have subjected them to sweeping and indiscriminate censures, is not surprising. Commentators will not always incur the severe labour of rendering justice in detail. It is easier and more plausible to generalise the language of criticism, which carries weight with the multitude in proportion to its decisiveness, than to examine the evidence with patience, and deliver an analytical judgment. Thus Theobald pronounced Donne's poetry to be "nothing but a continued heap of riddles," and Rochester said of Cowley's, that "not being of God, it could not stand." But Theobald was a driveller, and Rochester a ribald jester, and neither of them were qualified to appreciate, even assuming that they could understand, Donne and Cowley. Dr. Johnson's estimate of the metaphysical poets is, as might be anticipated, more just and comprehensive: he exposes their prevailing faults, but acknowledges their particular merits. He repeats Dryden's observation, that he and his contemporaries fell below Donne in wit, but surpassed him in poetry; and, after describing the main characteristics of the school, he adds, "Yet

great labour, directed by great abilities, is here wholly lost; if they frequently threw away wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truths: if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan it was at least necessary to read and think."

The popularity of Donne and Cowley during their own lives must be admitted as a proof that, whatever may be thought of them now, they once filled a large space in the world's applause. The age in which Donne lived gave birth to the richest poetry in our language; yet Donne was as highly esteemed as any of his contemporaries. He asserted, no doubt, other claims to the admiration of his countrymen. He was a profound scholar, a brilliant wit, and an eloquent preacher; but we must trace chiefly to his poetry the influence he exercised. One poet says of him, bewailing his death, and the poverty of language, coming after one who exhausted all its powers, to describe his epitaph —

"What henceforth we see
Of art or nature, must result from thee."

Another calls him

"The prince of wits, 'mongst whom he reign'd
High as a prince, and as great state maintained;"

adding,

"All indeed,
Compared with him, piped on an oaten reed."

Thomas Cary, towards the conclusion of an elegy on Donne, has these lines: —

"Here lies a king, that rul'd, as he thought fit,
The universal monarchy of wit."

And Endymion Porter, in a burst of enthusiasm, exclaims,

"Poets, be silent — let your numbers sleep —
For he is gone that did all Fancy keep,
Time hath no soul but his exalted verse."

Cowley, without imitating, followed in the track of Donne, and excelled him in the grasp and earnestness of his writings. He is more real and less fantastic, and, although not much closer to nature, nor much farther removed from the extravagant in art, he gains something each way, which is considerable in the aggregate. He was regarded both by his contemporaries and his successors as one of the greatest of our poets. Sir John Denham elaborately compliments him with having united in himself the attributes of Shakspeare and Fletcher, Spencer, and Jonson, says that he did not imitate but emulate Horace and Virgil, that he "new-reached" the flights of Pindar, and that

> "To him no author was unknown,
> Yet what he wrote was all his own."

Addison, who judiciously censures him for the "mixed wit" of his conceits, pays a high and remarkable tribute to his memory *, in which, amongst other things, he says,

> "Thy fault is only wit in its excess;
> But wit like thine in any shape will please."

This quality of wit is especially worthy of notice in Cowley: it extracted a panegyric even from Dr. Johnson. Speaking of the Chronicle, he observes, "Such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is in vain to expect except from Cowley." To these testimonies it may be enough to add, that Milton is said to have declared that Shakspeare, Spenser, and Cowley were the three greatest English poets; that lord Clarendon remarked that Cowley had, in his time, "taken a flight above all men in poetry;" and that Pope, always reluctant to do justice to those amongst his predecessors to whom he

* Account of the greatest English poets, addressed to Mr. H. Sacheverell. See also Spectator.

was largely indebted, lamented Cowley in a strain of elegant verse in his "Windsor Forest."

But the praises of the best judges are not sufficient to decide the real merits of poetry. They may applaud it for its mastery of difficulties that cannot be rendered comprehensible to the mass of readers, or for those delicate strokes of skill that are perceptible only to the most refined tastes. It is by the ultimate effect it produces upon mankind at large that it must stand or fall. Posterity is the appellate jurisdiction of the muses. All men are not likely to be wrong by common assent; and if poetry contain in it the seeds of popularity, they are sure to germinate into fruit one day or another. We have seen that Cowley and Donne were esteemed in their own days to rank with the loftiest names in English literature; but from that period downwards they have gradually declined, year by year, until at last, without being actually forgotten, they are now seldom read. Such is the destiny of poetry in which artificial expedients are permitted to usurp the place of natural sentiments.

The history of all the poets who have indulged in this solemn masquerade of redundant perplexities will be found to establish the same result. Sir John Davies, if he was not the most metaphysical of the class, was at least the most logical and argumentative. His poems are apparently designed not to produce pleasure, but to enforce conviction: dry, cold, hard, and subtle, they have a syllogistic formality in them that is repulsive in so unexpected a shape. But who reads Sir John Davies' poetry now? His name, whenever it is referred to, is found in connection with subjects more congenial to the harsh character of his mind. Denham and Waller, although they have been accounted disciples in the school, can hardly be said to belong to it. They, at all events, escaped its worse vices, and by the harmony of their numbers improved, in one respect at least, upon their predecessors. Carew*, Suckling, Crashaw, and

* In Spence's Memoirs we find Pope (who describes Carew as a *bad* Waller) saying that Carew, Waller, and lord Lansdowne are all of one

Herrick * were the most distinguished of the minor metaphysicians in verse, and they are now remembered, not for those parts of their poetry which resembled that of Donne and Cowley, but for those beautiful lyrics and fragments in which they most widely departed from their models.

Carew's † verse is highly polished, but for the most part full of conceits and licentiousness, which latter characteristic cannot with justice be said to mark the metaphysical poets generally. They were too much engaged with their own speculations to think of their mistresses other than as abstractions, and had not enough of passion to warm them into pruriency of sentiment, however they might have committed indiscretions of diction. Lord Clarendon observes of Carew's poetry, that "for the sharpness of the fancy, and the elegance of the language in which that fancy was spread, they were at least equal, if not superior, to any of the time." This panegyric would be just, if it were limited in its application. Mr. Campbell says that he unites the point and polish of later times with many of the genial and warm tints of the elder muse: but the point and polish often consisted of quibbles and false finery, and the warm tints were sometimes too warm.

school, and Suckling, Mennis, and Prior of another. That opinion, I suspect, was only thrown out in the heedlessness of conversation, and I may be excused for venturing to call its justice into question.

* The last three poets are omitted by Mr. Southey, in his Select Works of the British Poets, while a large space is devoted to Davies, Habington, and Brown.

† Thomas Carew was descended from an ancient family of Devonshire, but the branch from which he immediately derived, was of Gloucestershire. He was the son of sir Matthew Carew, an active royalist in the civil war, was educated at Oxford, but never took out a degree, completing his education by the grand tour. He subsequently became a great favourite at court, was made gentleman of the privy chamber to Charles I., and was celebrated in his day for the sweetness and delicacy of his verses. Ben Jonson and sir William Davenant appear to have been amongst his warmest admirers, and the latter addressed him an epigram in which he says that his praises of beauty have rendered that commodity so high, that poor lovers can no longer afford to buy it. Sir John Suckling, in his half-playful and half-malicious way, introduced Carew in his "Session of the Poets," charging him with being too laborious a poet for the office of laureate, besides that he was already a cup-bearer. Carew died about 1639. Besides several minor poems, he wrote a masque, called "Cœlum Britannicum," which was played at Whitehall.

Suckling *, who pressed into a short life a wonderful variety of accomplishments and employments, ought

* The brief but brilliant existence of sir John Suckling was a complete exemplification of the spirit and character of his poetry. He was the son of the comptroller of the household of Charles I., and was born at Witham in Middlesex, in 1613. He was of such quick parts that he is said to have spoken Latin at five, and to have been able to write it at nine years of age, which we take to be one of those pleasant wonders with which the anecdote-makers of the time loved to embellish the history of the poets, and hardly more credible than the story of Surrey's Vision of the fair Geraldine in Cornelius Agrippa's mirror, without being half so interesting. Suckling, however, appears to have completed a course of classical education, although his acquaintance with general literature was slight and superficial. But he was a master of all the graceful accomplishments of a man of gallantry; he was a musician and a poet, and he added to these attractions the reputation of a high and even rash courage. He served in the wars of Gustavus Adolphus, and was present, according to his biographers, at no less than five sieges, three battles, and several skirmishes. Returning to England, he was distinguished at court as one of the finest gentlemen of the day, cultivated the society of the leading wits and poets, wrote four plays for the stage (which have long since been forgotten) expending the prodigal sum of four or five hundred pounds upon one of them, satirized the living poets in his celebrated piece of raillery, called the "Session of the Poets," in which he betrayed the weakness of desiring to be thought indifferent to literary fame, and at the cost of 12,000*l*., raised a "crack regiment" of horse, on the opening of the civil war, for the service of the king. The finery of this regiment excited universal ridicule, and the king is reported to have said on seeing sir John at the head of this flash battalion, that "the Scots would fight stoutly, were it but for the Englishmen's fine clothes." The whole army was beaten at Newburn, and Suckling's troops along with the rest fled from the field, which gave occasion to a variety of burlesque ballads and squibs. The most remarkable of these is the celebrated ballad, of which the following is the first stanza: —

> "Sir John he got him an ambling nag,
> To Scotland for to ride-a,
> With a hundred horse more, all his own he swore,
> To guard him on every side-a."

This ballad is attributed to sir John Mennis, who was himself turned into ridicule many years afterwards, by sir John Denham. Pepys tells us in his "Diary," that Denham showed him "a copy of verses of his upon sir John Mennis, going heretofore to Bullogne to eat a pig." The ballad about Suckling was by some illnatured people ascribed to Suckling himself,—but that was mere malice. The disaster and the mockery it drew upon him, affected his spirits deeply, and is said by some writers to have hastened his death, which, however, is not the fact. The manner of his death is related in Spence's "Anecdotes" as follows. About the beginning of the civil war, he was sent over to the continent with some letters to the queen, and on the night of his arrival at Calais, his servant ran away with his portmanteau, containing his money and papers. He no sooner discovered this in the morning than he inquired which way his servant had taken, and pulling on his boots in great haste, he felt great pain and uneasiness from one of them; but the horses being at the door, he leaped into his saddle, and unmindful of the boot that distressed him all the way, continued the pursuit until he overtook the fugitive at a distance of two or three posts. Having accomplished his object, and regained his portmanteau, he complained of a severe anguish in one of his feet, and fainted away. When his boot was taken off it was found to be full of blood. The cause of the calamity was traced to the servant who, knowing the impetuosity of his master's temper, had driven up a nail into one of the

scarcely to be drawn into this enumeration; for his poems, while they are tinged with the hues of the fashionable style of his period, are occasionally imbued with graces so peculiarly individual as to entitle him to separate consideration. But he affords us on that account a stronger illustration of the kind of poetry that survives temporary refinements and special modes. His ballad of "The Wedding," and his beautiful lyric beginning with

"Why so pale and wan, fond lover?"

are alone familiar to the public in our times. The rest of his works are buried in oblivion.

Of Crashaw * still less is known, and it is not

boots, for the purpose of disabling him from pursuit. The wound rapidly inflamed, a violent fever set in, and terminated after a few days in death. Sir John Suckling died at the early age of twenty-eight. He was too remarkable a man to escape the tattle of the coteries. Numberless stories are afloat in the gossiping books of the time, about his immorality, and, no doubt, he plunged into licentiousness as deeply as any of his contemporaries; but we can hardly help thinking that there was some intellectual grace of redemption in his excesses after all. Pope [see Spence] said that he had a story from the duke of Buckingham, who had it from old lady Dorset, (who was an especial, and in some sort, a mysterious favourite with Suckling in her youth, and who, moreover, seems to have been very proud of having it known), that Suckling carried his vices so far as to cheat at cards, getting, says Spence, certain marks, known only to himself, affixed to all the cards that came from the great makers in France. It is not a sufficing answer to a piece of scandal of this kind, to say that one does not believe it, because one may say so merely from an unwillingness to think it true; but there is no harm in saying, that no one is bound to believe it, or any thing else, on such frail testimony. Perhaps cheating at cards was a court fashion,—if so, there can be no doubt that Suckling was the greatest cheat amongst them, for he was unquestionably the most accomplished courtier.

* The incidents that have been chronicled of the life of Crashaw all tend to show the sincerity of his piety, and how entirely he sacrificed worldly objects to it. He was the son of an English clergyman, and was educated first at the Charter-house, and afterwards entered Cambridge, where he obtained a fellowship in 1637, and distinguished himself for his learning, and his talents, having at that time written several Latin poems, which were justly esteemed for their purity. Refusing, however, to take the covenant, he was ejected from the college in 1644. The increasing fury of the presbyterians rendering England uneasy, if not unsafe to him, he went over to France, and was reduced to extremities in Paris, being, as Wood, in his quaint way observes, "but a meer scholar and very shiftless," when Cowley, who was there at the time, (1646) found him in great distress, and generously recommended him to the protection of Henrietta Maria. Poor Crashaw, receiving some immediate relief from these liberal friends, (who at best had not much in their power) went into Italy, furnished with letters of recommendation, having already openly embraced the Roman catholic

hazarding too much to say that, except such stray specimens as may have found their way into the anthologies (and of these we are acquainted with only one *), his poems are a sealed volume to the bulk of readers. But like strong spices which, however carefully you conceal them, still transmit their perfume to the air, Crashaw's fame has penetrated where his verses have never been seen. He is a devotional poet, blamed by some persons for blending with his pious aspirations too much of the heat and fervour of imagination, and apt to run into excesses in the chace of images; but regarding these faults of temperament and judgment in a tolerant spirit, Crashaw must be admitted to a distinguished place amongst the few poets who have elevated the tone of this class of lyrics, and inspired it with a spiritual beauty the height and delicacy of which no other writer has attained.

religion, and became secretary to one of the cardinals at Rome. He was subsequently made one of the canons or chaplains of the rich church of Our Lady of Loretto, where he died and was buried in 1650. His whole life was a dream of religious enthusiasm. His poems are full of the excitement of faith, heightened by a temperament peculiarly ardent. He was a man of considerable erudition, was well acquainted with Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish, and was beloved by those who knew him best. Cowley has celebrated his admiration for Crashaw, in a poem in which he emulates his fervour, of which the following couplet is especially remarkable:—

"His faith, perhaps, in some nice tenets might
Be wrong; his life I'm sure was in the right."

Pope has improved upon the toleration of the sentiment in a line, which if not memorable for any thing else, is at least curious for its direct imitation of Cowley. Pope, speaking of faith, says

"He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

But Cowley was not the only poet imitated by Pope. That profound master of versification did not hesitate to turn some of Crashaw's most striking thoughts to his own use, although he was so deficient in magnanimity as not only not to acknowledge them, but even to depreciate the excellence of the poet he surreptitiously copied. Perhaps the most celebrated passage in Crashaw's poems, is that Latin epigram on the miracle of turning the water into wine, concluding with

"Lympha pudica Deum videt et erubuit:"—
"The modest water saw its God and blushed."

And this exquisite line is popularly attributed to various other writers.

* Specimens of the Lyrical, Descriptive, and Narrative Poets of Great Britain. By John Johnstone. Edinburgh, 1828.

Herrick * survives in his lighter pieces, while the body of his poetical effusions remains a dead letter. The sparkling anacreontic gaiety that dances through his madrigals will always awaken corresponding sentiments of pleasure. The elasticity of his animal spirits imparts a bounding joyousness to his verses, that finds a genial response in the spontaneous vivacity of the lines. His songs, unlike those which are "written for music," and which may be said to be affianced from their birth, as princes and princesses are sometimes foredoomed to stately marriages from the cradle, have that exquisite natural melody in them, with which music might be supposed to fall in love. His lines to "Althea," and the song opening with that flash of light-heartedness —

"Gather the rosebuds while ye may," &c.

have rarely been equalled in their different ways, and never surpassed. The criticism of Philips that Herrick was "not particularly influenced by any nymph or goddess, except his *maid Prue*, though he has occasionally shown a pretty flowery and pastoral gale of fancy," is a worthless snatch of irony, springing out of unworthy party feelings. It is more to the purpose that nothing remains of Herrick but these slight pieces, and that the great majority of his works are deformed by the very worst and most offensive sins of the bad taste of his age. Mr. Campbell observes that his "beauties are so deeply involved in surrounding coarseness and extravagance as to constitute not a tenth part of his poetry; or rather, it may be safely affirmed, that of 1400 pages of verse which he has left, not a hundred are worth reading." I will not affect to have measured Herrick's defects with such mathematical precision, nor do I

* Robert Herrick, like most of the men of genius of that convulsed period, passed through a life of alternate cloud and sunshine. The son of a goldsmith, he was born in London, and educated at Cambridge. Having taken holy orders, he was presented, in 1629, with the living of Dean Prior in Devonshire, which he lost at the breaking out of the civil war. Upon the Restoration, however, he was reinstated in his benefice, but did not live long to enjoy it. His poems were published in 1648, under the title of "Hesperides." A selection from them edited by Dr. Nott, appeared in Bristol in 1810, and a complete edition was printed at Edinburgh in 1823.

subscribe to the assertion that they bear such a vast proportion to his beauties; but that only a minor part of his productions are worthy of being restored to the light is a fact to be regretted, and which, unfortunately, cannot be disputed.

Of the collection of poems issued by Cowley on his return to England, the Pindaric Odes and the Davideis are the most important and remarkable. The avowed object of the former was to resuscitate in English the spirit and form of the ancient lyric. The experiment was at all events a bold one, and even if Cowley did not entirely succeed in the attempt, it is doubtful whether any body else could have done better. So little understood was the Pindaric ode in England in the 17th century—it is not quite certain that it is much better understood in the 19th — that Cowley found it necessary to enter into a preliminary explanation of the design and purpose of the compositions, lest his readers might misinterpret his poems, and find fault with them where none really existed. In this preface, and, as Dr. Johnson alone has remarked, in the notes to the Davideis, and in many passages scattered through his works, Cowley developes a power of criticism, a clearness and depth of thought, and a thorough knowledge of the inner nature of poetry, for which he has never got as much credit as he deserves. Taking into consideration the period at which he wrote, the paucity of authorities of all kinds, the heresies of some of the popular writers, and the unfixedness of the public taste, Cowley may be said to have conferred a large benefit upon his readers in these isolated commentaries and scraps of critical suggestions. There were grammars enough extant; even Shirley, with the grave responsibility of a school upon his shoulders, showed how meanly he thought of the intelligence of the people, by writing the rules of syntax, and other elementary treatises, in doggerel rhymes. Before Spenser's time, to the shame doubtless of the venerable Roger Ascham, the laws of rhetoric were put forward in ludicrous forms, with hierogliphic wood-

cuts, and quaint devices; and Aristotle himself was "done into English." But there was no criticism, either fleeting or permanent, no authoritative judgment to point the "flowery steeps" of Parnassus. Cowley would, doubtless, have written more in this way — for which he was so eminently qualified — but that he scarcely regarded the age as being ripe enough for such exercises.

It would be inconsistent with the plan and limits of this biography to extend it by specimens of Cowley's perspicuous mode of treating such subjects: but the following passage upon the Pindaric Odes is so immediately applicable to the matter which has involved this slight digression, and is in itself so short, that it can hardly be excluded without injustice. After stating that the odes are written in that style which Dionysius of Halicarnassus attributes to Alcæus, he observes, "The digressions are many and sudden and sometimes long, according to the fashion of all liriques, and of Pindar above all men living. The figures are unusual and bold, even to temerity, and such as I durst not have to do withal in any other kind of poetry. The numbers are various and irregular, and sometimes (especially some of the long ones) seem harsh and uncouth, if the just measures and cadences be not observed in the pronunciation. So that almost all their sweetness and numerosity (which is to be found, if I mistake not, in the roughest, if rightly repeated) lies in a manner wholly at the mercy of the reader."

This description is luminous and true; yet Cowley's critics, with the exception of Dr. Sprat, who praises him, by the way, all throughout rather indiscriminately, appear to have overlooked the key he furnishes to the melody not only of his own odes, but of all irregular lyrics. The sweetness and music of the numbers — assuming the versification to be skilfully wrought — must depend upon the propriety and exactitude with which the cadences are marked and balanced in the reading. What would become of the melody of Chaucer —

whose lines are truly "linked sweetness"—if the French accentuation were not carefully observed in those words which break the flow to the ear of the modern English reader? All the critics who have written about Cowley acknowledge the power of the design, and for the most part the grandeur of the structure of his Pindarics, but they all agree in censuring the ruggedness of his measures. This opinion has been transmitted from one writer to another, until at length it has become resolved into an assertion which nobody thinks of disputing. Yet its accuracy may be reasonably doubted notwithstanding. It ought to be remarked in the first place that we must not decide upon the melodiousness of the old English writers by any existing standard of measures, because, although melody is the same in all ages, the materials it employs at different times are widely dissimilar. The language has become softened and filtered down since Cowley wrote. It had then the masculine sinews and robust powers of vigorous youth gathering strength from each fresh exertion: it is now refined into effeminacy. Our numbers now glide like the smooth and liquid tones of the flute—then they swept upon the ears like the peals of the mighty organ. But there is melody in both; and until it can be shown that abrupt pauses and rapid alternations are incompatible with music, it cannot be affirmed that the principle upon which Cowley's odes are formed is erroneous. In the next place, the poor art of *tuning* the lines to adapt them to the uninstructed faculty of the multitude—an art which has been so assiduously cultivated in our day—was unknown in Cowley's time. The poets concentrated their attention upon higher requisites. Take a piece of living passion out of Marlowe or Webster, and test it by your tuning-fork, and see what you will make of it. Music is as often composed of discords as of unisons, and the mere regularity of the rise and fall by no means constitutes the pith of its sweetness. That there are some lines in Cowley's Pindarics which are unworthy of Cowley must be frankly admitted; and that he has not always accom-

plished the unity he aimed at is also true; but it is equally certain that the prevailing character of the odes is not that of unmetrical ruggedness. They are irregular enough, but it is not inharmonious irregularity. Their very irregularity constitutes one of their peculiar merits. Dr. Sprat judiciously observes that the irregularity of the numbers renders this description of poetry "fit for all manner of subjects, the pleasant, the grave, the amorous, the heroic, the philosophical, the moral, the divine:" and he adds that "the frequent alteration of the rhythm and feet affects the mind with a more serious delight, while it is soon apt to be tired by the settled pace of one constant measure." What he says further of its near affinity to prose, which he considers as one of its principal charms, is an extravagance into which he seems to have been led by a superfluous desire to reconcile all opinions and tastes in favour of Cowley. That which is not true of any kind of poetry*. is least true of the Pindaric ode and [illegible] exhibits more zeal than discretion in attempting to prove that these pieces bear a close relationship to prose after having, in the preceding sentence, endeavoured to show that they belong to the highest region of poetry. They cannot be claimed by both without casting an awkward suspicion on their legitimacy. But, waiving this extraneous point, Dr. Sprat's view of the uses of irregular numbers is not only just and discriminating, but offers a curious opposition to the slurring terms in which they have been alluded to by subsequent writers. Dryden declares that Cowley "brought Pindaric verse as near perfection as was possible in so short a time;" but he cannot help throwing in something to depreciate this same close approach to

* This must be understood to refer to the essential differences between poetry and prose, not the accidental dissimilarity of forms. Prose may sometimes rise to the dignity and exuberance of poetry, and with advantage, but poetry never can descend to the level of prose without degradation. And all this depends as much on the subject as on the manner of treating it. "The Iliad does not cease to be poetry," says Hazlitt, "in a literal translation; and Addison's Campaign has been very properly denominated a gazette in rhyme." The same acute critic observes in another place, "Burke's writings are not poetry, nothwithstanding the vividness of the fancy, because the subject matter is abstruse and dry, not natural but artificial."

perfection, and so he hits upon the inequality of the thoughts and the want of sweetness in the numbers. "If," says he, "I may be allowed to speak my mind modestly,"—an allowance of which he availed himself with a most stingy frugality,—"and without injury to his sacred ashes, somewhat of the purity of English, somewhat of more equal thoughts, somewhat of sweetness in the numbers; in a word, somewhat of a finer turn and more lyrical verse is yet wanting." * Now this criticism wants one quality, which alone is more fatal to its reception than all the wants put together which it attributes to Cowley—it wants appositeness: for the sweetness and fineness and equality Dryden desiderates, however excellent they might be in other forms of verse, would have been utterly inconsistent with the spirit of these antique and magnificent lyrics. Congreve, who has written, it must be allowed, the best exposition in the language of the Pindaric ode, follows in the same course, with less excuse of heedlessness or want of critical learning in the matter. After observing that "he thinks nothing should be objected to the latitude Cowley has taken in his Pindaric odes," he immediately goes on to state the strongest objection that could be urged, as if, having granted an indulgence to protect Cowley from the animadversions of others, he had a clear right to find fault with him himself. "The beauty of his verses," says Congreve, "are an atonement for the irregularity of his stanzas; and though he did not imitate Pindar in the strictness of his numbers, he has very often happily copy'd him in the force of his figures, and the sublimity of his stile and sentiments." † Congreve's criticism is entitled to be received with respect, for he had profoundly considered the subject; but he was not an infallible judge of the mechanism of poetry. Throughout the whole of the essay which contains this passage he invariably confounds melody and harmony, which is the more surprising since

* Preface to the Miscellany.
† A Discourse on the Pindaric Ode, prefixed to an Ode to the Queen, on the victories of Marlborough.

he undertook to pronounce so definitively upon the elements of which they are severally composed.

The Davideis has been so fully and ingeniously examined by Dr. Johnson, that nothing more would need to be said about it but to refer to that piece of criticism, were it not that, in censuring the conceits that are so profusely spread over the poem, Johnson appears to have forgotten the age at which it was written. Some allowances ought to be made for the prodigality of the imagination at a season of life when the more thoughtful faculties developed in the poem are so rarely brought out. Upon a calm examination of the Davideis, keeping in view the youth of the author, the reader is much more likely to be surprised at the vast scope of reflection and knowledge it embraces, than to be offended at its redundancies. Dr. Johnson, who had a keen discernment of faults, was not always as willing to acknowledge excellencies. What he does say is, perhaps, indisputable, and is said oracularly as if it were so; but then he does not say enough. He expatiates upon the "spangles" of the Davideis, and shows in detail most of the points that are vulnerable to ridicule, leaving the world to find out for itself the particular merits which he indicates in the gross.

As a pendant to the strictures of Johnson (who admits that the work cannot be fairly criticised as an epic poem, there being but four books of twelve which Cowley, on the model of Virgil, originally designed it to occupy), the remarks of Dr. Sprat may be allowed to supply the deficiency. "The contrivance," he observes, "is perfectly ancient, which is certainly the true form of heroic poetry, and such as was never yet outdone by any new devices of modern wits. The subject was truly divine, even according to God's own heart. The matter of his invention, all the treasures of knowledge and histories of the Bible. The model of it comprehended all the learning of the East. The characters lofty and various: the numbers firm and powerful: the digressions beautiful and proportionable: the design to

submit mortal wit to heavenly truths. In all there is an admirable mixture of human virtues and passions with religious raptures." The exaggeration of this passage, if there be any in it, does not consist in an undue elevation of Cowley, but in the temperament of the writer, which has the effect, not of magnifying truth, but of giving it an increased *momentum* by the force of enthusiasm. Even this, however, is better than the special pleading of Dr. Johnson, who in one place tells us that by the "*abruption*"—*i. e.* the stoppage of the poem, when only a third of it was written—"posterity lost more instruction than delight," and who in the next page assures us that in this very poem we "find much to admire, but little to approve."

Shortly after his return to England, Cowley was seized by some of Cromwell's messengers, who were then in search of a royalist of considerable note, and who mistook the person of the poet for that gentleman. This seizure led to a strict examination, and a severe confinement, Cowley's adherence to the king's party being a matter of notoriety. At first the usurping powers endeavoured to bring Cowley over to their side, and, failing in that object, they committed him to prison, from which with great difficulty he obtained his release, upon a heavy bail of 1000*l.*, which Dr. Scarborough undertook on his behalf.

It is in this part of Cowley's life that the only passage occurs, out of which any controversy has ever arisen, or out of which any suspicion could be wrung to cast a doubt upon his integrity. The incident is simple enough in the relation; but as it exposed him for a time to considerable obloquy, it requires to be stated with as much precision as we possess the means of attaining.

When Cowley arrived in England, he found that the royalists were reduced to the most desperate circumstances. Their enemies had become so united and powerful, that there was evidently no chance of assailing them with effect from without, and the only hope

that remained for the friends of the king was to wait with patience until some fortunate accident should weaken or dismember that formidable ascendancy from within. The blind devotion, on the other hand, of the cavaliers, constantly exposed them to the worst dangers, without contributing in the slightest degree to advance the cause they had at heart. Cowley, says Sprat, "saw this with much grief; and though he approved their constancy as much as any man living, yet he found their unseasonable showing it did only disable themselves, and give their adversaries great advantages of riches and strength by their defeat." He concluded, therefore, that it would greatly benefit their security, and, thereby, the secret movements of the king's party, if any man who was well known to belong to it could succeed in impressing the puritans with a belief that they were willing generally to submit to be at peace, or, in more plain terms, to surrender the prosecution of designs which they could no longer carry on with a reasonable prospect of success. To use the words of his biographer, "he saw that it was impossible for him to pursue the ends for which he came hither, if he did not make some kind of declaration of his peaceable intentions." The most scrupulous political moralist will scarcely venture to affirm that in this state of things Cowley was not justified in assuming a neutrality in public affairs, whatever might have been his desire or intention of privately assisting the cause to which he was attached. He was, in some wise, placed under circumstances of coercion, and, like a man who takes an oath by compulsion in contravention of a previously existing and higher obligation, he was not bound to observe the neutrality which he put on under the pressure of necessity. But this is supposing an extreme case. Cowley made no profession whatever, he merely expressed his weariness of a life of exhausting and frustrated exertions. To recede from the pursuit of an object when it is found to be hopeless, with the secret determination of resuming it at some more favourable moment, is an act of prudence rather than infidelity.

No man is morally required to sacrifice himself out of mere bravado, from which no practical result can flow to society, and by which no known principle of compensation, honour, or justice can be established. It is astonishing how trivial an incident in the life of such a man as Cowley will beget a storm of accusation and intemperance. The whole affair lies in the compass of two or three lines. He was in prison at the time; and bringing out his poems he introduced a brief passage into the preface, which was interpreted with such ill nature by the royalists as to bring the sincerity of his allegiance into question. The spring of all this contention was a declaration to the effect that "his desire had been for some days past, and did still very vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and to forsake this world for ever." There was nothing very mysterious in this desire; on the contrary, had he really been actuated by it, nothing could be more natural. But Anthony Wood tells us that "complying with the men then in power (which was much taken notice of by the royal party), he obtained an order to be created doctor of physic; which being done to his mind (whereby he gained the ill will of some of his friends), he went into France again, having made a copy of verses on Oliver's death." To say the least of this statement it exhibits an odd jumble of facts that occurred at different intervals of time, making it appear that there was a dependency and connection between them, which in reality did not exist. What is meant by his "complying with the men in power," or how far he complied with them, is not explained, although that is, after all, the main point at issue; but it is insinuated, perhaps unintentionally, that he acceded to the wishes (whatever they may have been) of the party in power, for the purpose of obtaining a mandamus, to get a degree in physic, and that having got the degree he went over to France, after making a copy of verses on the death of Cromwell. Now, Sprat, who was more likely to be accurately informed on the

subject than Wood, and who, it must be granted, at the same time, was more likely to represent it in the best light, informs us, that when Cowley returned to England he was advised to dissemble the main intention of his coming over, under the disguise of applying himself to some settled profession; and that of physic was thought most proper. He accordingly devoted himself closely, and with his usual perseverance to the subject; and after many anatomical dissections, proceeded to the consideration of simples, retiring into a fruitful part of Kent to study in the fields and the woods the forms of those plants of which he had read. All this occurred during the commonwealth, and was in fact a part of the plan he laid down of disguising in the prosecution of a particular purpose, distinct from political affairs, the deep interest he took in the progress of public events. He had no need to take out a degree in physic to enable him, according to the confused collocation of Wood's closing sentence, to go over to France; nor did he go, until he was entirely released from his responsibility to his surety by the death of Cromwell, when he was free to go, or not, as he pleased. Sprat does not say a word about the compliance with the men in power, which can be resolved into nothing more than the declaration of his desire to retreat from the negotiations and contentions in which he had been engaged.

If Cowley gave any affirmative pledge, it does not appear; but as he never took any part on the side of the government, nor even became a passive agent in their hands, it may be inferred that the point in his conduct which displeased his friends was the avowal of neutrality implied in his wish for repose. Dr. Johnson sees no reason for blaming this wish in a man harassed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another; but out of these slight materials, notwithstanding, he contrives to carve a sharp antithesis, which, although it virtually conveys no meaning whatever, seems to convey a great deal. "Yet," he says, "let neither our reverence for a genius, nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose

us to forget, that, if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice." There is great virtue in an *if*, and upon this, the moral turns. But what virtue there was in the "activity" of a man circumstanced like Cowley, in the midst of powerful enemies, without resources, without any means of combination with others, watched, chased, seized, and finally thrown into prison, the moralist has forgotten to inform us.

That this profession, scanty enough in words and earnestness, of submission to the government, if it deserve to be called so, provoked some painful distrusts on the part of the royalists, is attested in common by all the writers of the day; but upon a review of the whole circumstances, there appears to be such little room to justify their suspicions, that I can only express surprise they should ever have entertained any. It is certain, however, that their doubts were neither very serious nor enduring; for, upon the death of Cromwell, when Dr. Scarborough's bond was annulled, and Cowley's suppressed spirit had taken its revenge in the shape of a scathing discourse on the government of the protector, he went over to Paris, to renew his efforts in the service of the king, and was received with warmth, and, which is more to the purpose, trusted again in confidential offices.

Cowley was created doctor of physic at Oxford, on December 2. 1657; and although he proposed to himself by this step nothing more than to disguise his real intentions in remaining in England, he followed the preliminary studies of medicine with great assiduity; became a busy member of the Royal Society, (to the constitution of which, at this period, several interesting allusions will be found in Evelyn's Memoirs and Correspondence,) and composed, in Latin, several books upon plants, flowers, and trees. Of these poems, it has been remarked that, if the Latin performances of Milton and Cowley be compared, the advantage seems to lie on the side of Cowley. Milton is generally content, says Dr. Johnson, to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity

or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conception.

These occupations filled up the measure of his stay in England: but now came the restoration, with its train of rejoicings, its influx of novelties, its tumults, and its court jealousies; and Cowley naturally looked for the reward of his long and faithful services, his sufferings, and sacrifices. To mark more emphatically the sentiments with which the events filled his mind, he composed "A Song of Triumph" for the occasion; but like most men who have attended princes in their adversity, and calculated upon a generous remembrance of them in the season of prosperity, Cowley was grievously disappointed. The mastership of the Savoy, which had been repeatedly promised to him, was so long withheld, that he at last gave it up in despair. He lost it, says Wood, by certain persons, enemies to the muses; but, it is more probable he lost it by persons, who, for the sake of providing for their own friends, seized upon the excuse afforded by his submission to Cromwell to set aside his claims altogether. About this time, many circumstances conspired to mortify him. He had prepared his juvenile comedy of "The Guardian" for the stage, under the title of "Cutter of Coleman Street*," and it was treated with undue severity, as a satire on the king's party; the merry-witted and profligate fellow who is the hero of it bearing, perhaps, too close, although unintentional, a resemblance to his majesty. According to Dryden, who went to the first representation with Dr. Sprat, and who afterwards described the reception of the piece to Dennis, the dissatisfaction of the audience must have been unequivocally expressed; for he says, that "when they told Cowley how little favour had been shown him, he received the news of his ill success not with so much firmness as might have been expected from so great a man." But Cowley's disappointment

* Not "*The* Cutter of Coleman Street," as it is sometimes called. The title is taken from the name of one of the principal characters, Cutter, a roystering rogue about town.

however it may have surprised Dryden, was not altogether a proof of weakness. He was unaccustomed to the caprice of audiences, and might have anticipated, without drawing very largely on his vanity, that a piece which, in a less perfect form, had pleased the prince at the university, might be acceptable to the public in the theatre. In any case, it was hardly to be expected that a man who had previously written so much, with such continuous and increasing applause from the best judges, should not feel disconcerted at encountering such rough usage from an indiscriminate multitude. But the fate of the play must be referred to the satire it was supposed to convey against the royalists, to which cause its withdrawal is ascribed by Downes in the "Theatrical Register." Pepys witnessed the first representation, but singularly enough, does not say any thing about the way in which it was treated. The entry is as follows: — "After dinner, to the opera, where there was a new play ("Cutter of Coleman Street"), made in the year 1658, *with reflections much upon the late times;* and it being the first time, the pay was doubled, and so, to save money, my wife and I went into the gallery, and there sat and saw very well; *and a very good play it is.* It seems of Cowley's making." * It would hardly appear from this memorandum, that Pepys (who was secretary to the admiralty, and likely to detect any indecorous allusions to the king) discovered the disloyal qualities of the comedy. The "reflections upon the late times" would rather seem to be reflections upon Cromwell's party, especially as Pepys adds, that it was "a very good play." But the omission of all reference to the "ill success" spoken of by Dryden is still more remarkable. The fact, however, admits of no doubt; and Cowley was so openly assailed by the clamour raised upon the occasion, that he felt it necessary to exonerate himself from the charge of disaffection, by pointing out, in his preface, how improbable it was,

* Memoirs of Samuel Pepys, Esq., F.R.S., vol. i.

that, having devoted himself to the royal family throughout their misfortunes, he should choose the time of their restoration to begin a quarrel with them. It was, assuredly, improbable in the last degree; but the moral of the whole reveals the instability of that fortune which is built on the gratitude of courts.

All readers of English poetry are familiar with the "Complaint" of the "melancholy Cowley." It was produced by these disasters, and painted his despondency in a strain of most unlucky sadness. Instead of awakening the sympathy of his former patrons, it only exposed him to ridicule. He was evidently too sober and serious a man for the time. In the sudden transition from the straight-laced decorum of the protectorate to the levities of the new reign all such fine and sensitive spirits were crushed down by the rampant and disorderly rout of flatterers, revellers, and satirists. For a brief period they gave a tone to the public mind; but it was upon that brief period that the turn of Cowley's fortunes depended. He missed the opportunity of success in the first instance, and wanted the requisite adaptability to recover it. Like others, he came in for a share of malicious sarcasm, and was lampooned in the well-known doggerel on the election of a laureate:—

"Savoy-missing Cowley came into the court,
Making apologies for his bad play;
Every one gave him so good a report,
That Apollo gave heed to all he could say:
Nor would he have had, 't is thought, a rebuke,
Unless he had done some notable folly;
Writ verses unjustly in praise of Sam Tuke,
Or printed his pitiful Melancholy.

Doggerels of this kind appear pointless and contemptible in after-times, but at the moment of their production they sometimes exercise as much influence as the most weighty anathemas of criticism.

The pressure of all these circumstances induced Cowley to carry at last into effect that desire for solitude which had been the dream of his youth, and which, in the midst

of the active concerns that occupied the last ten or twelve years of his life, he had never entirely relinquished. He determined, therefore, to abandon the vain pursuit of fortune in the crowded capital, and to go into close retirement for the rest of his life. This resolution is attributed by Anthony Wood to disappointment. "Not finding," says Wood, "that preferment conferred upon him which he expected, while others for their money carried away most places, he retired discontented into Surrey." That a deep sentiment of chagrin at the frustration of his just expectations may have mingled in his determination to forsake the court is hardly to be doubted; but Sprat represents his retreat into the country as the result of a yearning for repose, and not of dissatisfaction with the world. "He now thought," says his biographer, "that he had sacrificed enough of his life to curiosity and experience. He had enjoyed many excellent occasions of observation. He had been present in many great revolutions, which in that tumultuous time disturbed the peace of all our neighbour states, as well as our own. He had nearly beheld all the splendour of the highest part of mankind. He had lived in the presence of princes, and familiarly conversed with greatness in all its degrees, which was necessary for one that would condemn it aright; for to scorn the pomp of the world before one knows it, does commonly proceed rather from ill manners than a true magnanimity. He was now weary of all the vexations and formalities of an active condition. He had been perplexed with a long compliance to foreign manners. He was satiated with the arts of court; which sort of life, though his virtue had made it innocent to him, yet nothing could make it quiet. These were the reasons that moved him to forego all public employments, and to follow the violent inclination of his own mind, which, in the greatest throng of his former business, had still called upon him, and represented to him the true delights of solitary studies, of temperate pleasures, and of a moderate revenue, below the malice and flatteries of

fortune." Sprat almost makes it appear that Cowley refused some proffered favours from his royal friends, when he speaks of his foregoing all public employments; but Sprat was on the way to advancement, and had strong motives for desiring to create an impression that Cowley had not been neglected by his majesty. Yet, for all that, he cannot, with his most pliant ingenuity, conceal the advantages Cowley discerned in a life of retirement over a life of artificial forms and slavish dependency; and there is a noble elevation of sentiment (which could hardly have been expected in an argument obviously designed to vindicate the king) in the beautiful passage where he observes that Cowley was "satiated with the arts of court; which sort of life, though his virtue had made it innocent to him, *yet nothing could make it quiet.*"

The memorials Cowley has left behind of his attachment to a country life are so visibly stamped with the image of truth, so full of earnest and devotional feeling, and so free from that affectation of nature which is transparent in the works of poets who never really loved her, that it would be difficult to reconcile ourselves to a suspicion that there was more of morbid discontent than of a genuine and hearty desire for retirement in his resolution to forswear the town. But he was connected with it by so many associations, and had been so long mixed up with the affairs of public life, in which, as an author, he still had a personal interest, that, perhaps, he could not make up his mind to bury himself in complete seclusion at such a distance as would have cut him off from all means of convenient access and intercourse. Great as was his longing for the green fields and tranquil woods, he could not wholly shut out his old connections; and so he fell into a compromise of his conflicting inclinations, and fixed himself at Battersea, from whence, finding the situation not agree very well with his health, he removed to Barnes, and subsequently to Chertsy, always, says Pope, farther and farther from

town.* He suffered much inconvenience from the insalubrious situations he had thus chosen on the banks of the Thames, and at Barnes was afflicted with a dangerous fever, from which he recovered slowly, but the effects of which continued with him long after. During his residence at that place, he enjoyed the occasional visits of a few chosen friends, and sometimes he went into London to consult books, or to communicate with the publishers. Evelyn was one of his most constant and anxious friends. He has a note in his diary of having gone on 14th January, 1663, to visit "his excellent and ingenious friend Cowley at Barnes;" and another memorandum of having been again to see him "after his sickness," on 2d January, 1664.†

Cowley was not idle in his retreat. He occupied himself much with the labours of husbandry, although from the scantiness of his means it was necessarily upon a small scale. His allowance, after all his toils, was not more than 300*l.* a year ‡; but through the intercession of the duke of Buckingham and the earl of St. Alban's, he obtained a lease of a farm on the queen's lands at Chertsy, on such terms as enabled him to pass the remainder of his life in ease. Amongst the subjects to which his attention at this period was drawn may be mentioned the contentions that were then agitating all men of learning concerning the Royal Society. We find Evelyn urging him to take up the affair, and throw the weight of his support into the scale in favour of the institution. Evelyn's letter and Cowley's reply are curious; the former for its exposition of the early plan of the society, and the latter as a specimen of the poet's epistolary manner. The work alluded to in the opening of Evelyn's letter was an answer to an essay written by sir George Mackenzie, in which the claims of solitude were set forth in preference to public employment. Evelyn had formerly advocated solitude, and was still of the

* See Spence's Anecdotes.
† Memoirs of John Evelyn, Esq., F.A.S., vol. i.
‡ This is stated on Pope's authority, in Spence's Anecdotes.

same opinion, but, as a sport in dialectics, had set about a refutation of sir George MacKenzie's arguments.

To Abraham Cowley, Esq.

Sr,—You had to be astonish'd at the presumption, not to name it affront, that I who have so highly celebrated Recesse, and envied it in others, should become an Advocate for the Enemie, which of all others it abhorrs and flies from. I conjure you to believe yt I am still of the same mind, and that there is no person alive who dos more honor and breathe after the life and repose you so happily cultivate and adorne by your example: but as those who prays'd *Dirt*, a *Flea*, and the *Gowte*, so have I *publiq Employment* in that trifling Essay, and that in so weake a style compar'd to my Antagonists, as by that alone it will appeare I neither was nor could be serious; and I hope you will believe I speake my very sowle to you; but I have more to say which will require your kindness. Suppose our good friend were publishing some Eulogies on the Royal Society, and by deducing the originall, progress, and advantages of their designe, would bespeake it some veneration in the world. Has Mr. *Cowley* no inspiration for it? Would it not hang the most heroic wreath about his temples? Or can he desire a nobler or a fuller Argument either for the softest Aires or the loudest Echoes, for the smoothest or briskest strokes of his *Pindaric* Lyre?

There be those who aske, What have the Royal Society done? Where their Colledge? I neede not instruct you how to answer or confound these persons, who are able to make even those informe Blocks and Stones daunce into order, and charme them into better sense. Or if they had their insolent presse, you are capable to show them how they have layd solid foundations to perfect all noble Arts, and to reform all imperfect Sciences. It requires an History to recite onely the Arts, the Inventions, and Phænomena already ab-

solved, improved, or opened. In a word, our Registers have outdone *Pliny*, *Porta*, and *Alexis*, and all the Experimentalists, nay even the great *Verulam* himselfe, and have made a nobler and more faithfull Collection of real seacrets, usefull and instructive, than has hitherto been shown.—S^r, We have a Library, a Repository, and an Assembly of as worthy and greate Persons as the World has any; and yet we are sometimes the subject of Satyr, and the Songs of Drunkards; have a King to our Founder, and yet want a Mecænas; and above all, a Spirit like yours, to raise us up Benefactors, and to compell them to thinke the Designe of the *Royall Society* as worthy their regards, and as capable to embalme their names, as the most heroic Enterprise, or any thing Antiquity has celebrated; and I am even amaz'd at the wretchedness of this Age, that acknowledges it no more. But the Devil, who was ever an enemy to Truth, and to such as discover his praestigious Effects, will never suffer the promotion of a Designe so destructive to his dominion, which is to fill the world with Imposture, and to keepe it in Ignorance, without the utmost of his malice and contradiction. But you have numbers and charmes that can bind even these spirits of darknesse, and render their Instruments obsequious; and we know you have a divine Hyme for us: the luster of the R^l Society calls for an Ode from the best of Poets upon the noblest Argument. To conclude: here you have a field to celebrate the Greate and the Good, who either do, or should favour the most auguste and worthy designe that ever was set on foot in the world; and those who are our real Patrons and Friends you can eternise; those who are not, you can conciliate and inspire to do gallant things.—But I will add no more, when I have told you, with very greate truth, that I am, S^r, &c.

Sayes Court, 12th March, 1666–7.*

* Memoirs of John Evelyn, Esq., F.R.S., vol. ii.

Here follows Cowley's answer: —

To J. Evelyn, Esq.

S^r, — I am asham'd of y^e rudeness I have committed in deferring so long my humble thanks for y^r obliging Letter, w^{ch} I received from you at y^e beginning of y^e last month. My laziness in finishing y^e copy of Verses, upon y^e Royal Society, for w^{ch} I was engag'd before by Mr. Sprat's desire, and encouraged since by you, was the caus of this delay, haveing designed to send it to you enclosed in my Letter; but I am told how y^t y^e History is almost quite printed, and will bee published so soon, y^t it were impertinent Labour to write out y^t w^{ch} you will so suddenly see in a better manner, and in y^e company of better things. I could not compréhend in it many of those excellent hints w^{ch} you were pleased to give mee, nor descend to the praises of particular persons, becaus those things affoord too much matter for one copy of verses, and enough for a Poem, or the History itself: some part of w^{ch} I have seen, and I think you will bee very well satisfied wth it. I took y^e boldness to show him y^r Letter, and hee says hee has not omitted any of those Heads, though hee wants y^r eloquence in expression. Since I had y^e honour to receive from you y^e reply to a book written in praise of a solitary Life, I have sent all about y^e Town in vain, to get y^e author, haveing very much affection for y^e subiect, w^{ch} is one of the noblest controversies both Modern and Ancient, and you have delt so civily wth your Adversary as makes him deserve to bee look'd after. But I could not meet wth him, the books beeing all, it seems, either burnt or bought up. If you pleas to do mee y^e favour to lend it to mee, and send it to my Brother's house (y^t was) in y^e King's Yard, it shall bee return'd to you, wthin a few days, wth y^e humble thanks of y^r most faithfull Serv^t, A. Cowley.

The essay here alluded to by Cowley will be found amongst his discourses in prose and verse, and reflects

seriously and impressively his own convictions of the charms of solitude. He intersperses the argument with snatches of verse which well up out of the depths of his spirit, and, even more forcibly than his prose, exhibit the earnestness and solemnity of his devotion to the pursuits of a retired life. Of these verses such passages as the subjoined cannot fail to move the reader:—

"Hail, old patrician trees, so great and good!
Hail, ye plebeian underwood!
Where the poetic birds rejoice,
And for their quiet nests and plenteous food
Pay with their grateful voice.

"Hail, the poor muse's richest manor-seat!
Ye country houses and retreat,
Which all the happy gods so love,
That for you oft they quit their bright and great
Metropolis above.

"Here nature does a house for me erect,
Nature! the wisest architect,
Who those fond artists does despise
That can the fair and living trees neglect,
Yet the dead timber prize."

It is much to be regretted that Cowley's private letters have not been collected and published. A few of them have been accidentally preserved by Peck and others, but the great mass of his correspondence with such intimate friends as Sprat and Clifford are yet, if they still exist, in MS. Sprat speaks of them in terms of unmixed panegyric as being distinguished by gaiety and innocence. But he objects to the publication of such papers, and blames our continental neighbours, especially the French, for indulging in the practice. His scrupulousness on this point may fairly be challenged as an error of judgment; and the very reasons he assigns for withholding familiar letters contain the strongest arguments for making them public in the proper season. "The truth is," he observes, "the

letters that pass between particular friends, if they are written as they ought to be, can scarce ever be fit to see the light. They should not consist of fulsome compliments, or tedious politicks, or elaborate elegancies, or general fancies; but they should have a native clearness and shortness, a domestic plainness, and a peculiar kind of familiarity, which can only affect the humour of those for whom they were intended. The very same passages which make writings of this nature delightful among friends, will lose all manner of taste when they come to be read by those that are indifferent. In such letters the souls of men should appear undressed; and in that negligent habit they may be fit to be seen by one or two in a chamber, but not to [illegible] abroad into the streets." The figure with which this piece [illegible] reasoning winds up, is true in one sense and false in [illegible] and this was the grand fault of most of [illegible] of the met[illegible]sical school, by which Sprat appear[illegible] in this inst[illegible] least, to have been infected. [illegible] follows [illegible] far when he talks of going into the streets [illegible]ndressed, forgetting that it was the soul and not the body [illegible] which he was speaking. We believe it will be universally admitted that we never get by any other means so close a view of the character of great men as in their familiar correspondence, because they there show themselves in their true natures before they have made up their toilet for the public. How little should we have known, for example, of Pope, had it not been for his correspondence and his conversation — the undress of his mind? Johnson wrote his life chiefly from the materials afforded by Spence's anecdotes.

But in Cowley's case, the suppression of any portion of his prose writings must be especially regretted, since, whatever may be thought of his poetry, the purity, perspicuity, and strength of his prose cannot be said to have been surpassed by any writer of his age. The conceits that so frequently deformed his verse, and which were the fault of the predominant taste rather

than of the poet (except that he is responsible for having fallen in with it), are no where to be found in his prose, which is as remarkable for simplicity of expression as for ease and clearness. His principal prose writings are his discourses on several subjects, with poetry intermingled, and his Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy, in which he suggested the establishment of a college, consisting of professors, scholars, chaplains, and other officers, the object of which was to promote the improvement and advantage of all other professions, "from that of the highest general even to the lowest artisan." He did not throw out this speculation as an ingenious toy to amuse the erudite and surprise the ignorant, but descended into the details of the plan with most minute attention to its practical development. In describing the business of the members of the proposed college, he says that it should be "to employ their whole time, wit, learning, and industry to these four, the most useful that can be imagined, and to no other ends:—First, to weigh, examine, and prove all things of nature delivered to us by former ages; to detect, explode, and strike a censure thro' all false monies with which the world has been paid and cheated so long, and, as I may say, to set the mark of the college upon all true coins, that they may pass hereafter without any further trial. Secondly, to recover the lost inventions, and, as it were, drowned laws of the antients. Thirdly, to improve all arts which we now have. And, lastly, to discover others which we yet have not." An institute of this description, comprehensive in its objects and effective in its machinery, was much wanted at the time it was proposed, and had it been founded with commensurate liberality, would have bequeathed important results to posterity. The whole scheme is illustrative of the vigour and subtlety of Cowley's intellect.

He designed two important works in prose, which, had he lived to accomplish them, would probably have transcended all his other productions. One of these

was a review of the principles of the primitive Christian church; and the other was a discourse concerning style, for which he was happily qualified. Dr. Sprat tells us that, in the former, he intended to have traced the origin of the church back to the lives of the Saviour, the apostles, and their immediate successors, for four or five centuries, until interest and policy prevailed over devotion; and, in the latter, to give an exposition of the various sorts of writing that were fit for all manner of arguments, to compare the authors of antiquity with the moderns, and to accomodate the whole to the particular use of the English genius and language. But he only lived long enough to draw the first outlines of these vast topics.

During his absence, a spurious piece, called the Iron Age, was published by some anonymous rogue in his name. He resented the wrong with more than ordinary heat in one of his prefaces, and took some pains to show how hard it is to be required to bear the burthen of another man's dulness. He evidently did not think a simple disavowal of the authorship a sufficient defence for his reputation, but proceeds in this elaborate manner, to express his annoyance. "I wondered," he observes, "how one, who could be so foolish to write such ill verses, should yet be so wise to set them forth as another man's rather than his own; though perhaps he might have made a better choice, and not fathered the bastard upon such a person, whose stock of reputation is, I fear, little enough for maintenance of his own numerous legitimate offspring of that kind. It would have been much less injurious if it had pleased the author to put forth some of my writings under his own name, rather than his under mine. He had been in that a more pardonable plagiary, and had done less wrong by robbery than he does by such a bounty; for nobody can be justified by the imputation, even of another's merit: our own coarse cloathes are like to become us better than those of another man's, though never so rich. But these, to say the truth, were so

beggarly, that I myself was ashamed to wear them. It was in vain for me that I avoided censure by the concealment of my own writings, if my reputation could be thus executed in effigy; and impossible it is for any good name to be safe, if the malice of witches have the power to consume and destroy it in an image of their own making. This, indeed, was so ill made, and so unlike, that I hope the charm took no effect." This was not the only instance in which Cowley's reputation rendered him the mark of trading speculation. In Dryden's Miscellany Poems, published in 1716, a piece called a Poem on the Civil War is given and attributed to Cowley; but as it was never in any authentic collection of his works, it may be presumed that it is no more entitled to be considered genuine than the Iron Age. The hint of the piece is avowedly taken from the following passages in one of the poet's numerous prefaces. "I have cast away all such pieces as I wrote during the time of the late troubles, with any relation to the differences that caused them; as, among others, *Three books of Civil War* itself, reaching as far as the first battle of Newbury, where the succeeding misfortunes of the party stopped the work." Moseley, the publisher of the supposed fragment refers to this passage, as conclusive of its authenticity, calling upon the reader to admire the turn of the verse, the copious and lively imagery, the warmth of passion, and delicacy of wit; but, in this flowing enthusiasm, he omits the only essential point, to show us how the fragment came into his possession. If its genuineness depended solely upon internal evidence, the reader could judge of that as well as himself.

Shortly after Cowley's removal to Chertsy, his health began to give way, aggravated by a variety of inconveniences and troubles, arising from his new situation —not the least of which was his separation from his friends, which, in spite of his love of the country, was not to be borne without complaint. The following letter, addressed to Dr. Sprat, is characteristic of the

uneasiness with which he attempted to carry off the philosophy of seclusion:—

"Chertsey, May 21. 1665.

"The first night that I came hither, I caught so great a cold, with a defluxion of rheum, as made me keep my chamber ten days. And, two after, had such a bruise on my ribs with a fall, that I am yet unable to move or turn myself in my bed. This is my personal fortune here to begin with. And, besides, I can get no money from my tenants and have my meadows eaten up every night by cattle put in by my neighbours. What this signifies, or may come to in time, God knows; if it be ominous, it can end in nothing less than hanging. Another misfortune has been, and stranger than all the rest, that you have broke your word with me, and failed to come, even though you told Mr. Bois that you would. This is what they call *monstri simile.* I do hope to recover my late hurt so farre within five or six days (though it be uncertain yet whether I shall ever recover it) as to walk about again. And then, methinks, you and I and *the Dean* might be very merry upon St. Ann's Hill. You might very conveniently come hither the way of Hampton Town, lying there one night. I write this in pain, and can say no more. *Verbum sapienti.*"

Cowley evidently did not reap from the country the enjoyment he had anticipated. He had previously looked at it only from a distance, and, in the midst of crowds, longed to be alone. But he was not a practical man. Farming and its concomitant toils and vexations appear to have delighted him, as one is delighted with pictures of rural life, with their melting autumnal tints and rustic forms; his imagination was in love with the woods and pastures, but his constitution was unfit for them. Besides, he entered upon the realization of his long-cherished project too late. His habits were formed; he had been accustomed to a life of constant and brilliant intercourse, of literary and diplomatic labour; and could not, by any stretch of reason, quite settle

down on the sudden in a retirement so complete and so hopeless. Perhaps, too, there were other feelings mixed up with his discomforts which he did not care to acknowledge. He is said to have betrayed latterly a disrelish for female society, which is supposed to have been generated by an early blight of his affections. The circumstance is alluded to, vaguely, as we have already observed, by Barnes, who says that he never had courage enough to make his passion known to the lady; and Pope, who was a marvellous gossip in such matters, seems to have got some clue to the affair, although he either did not, or could not, give the particulars. He says that Cowley, "in the latter part of his life, showed a sort of aversion for women; and would leave the room when they came in: 'twas probably from a disappointment in love. He was much in love with his Leonora; who is mentioned at the end of that good ballad of his, on his different mistresses. She was married to Dean Sprat's brother; and Cowley never was in love with any body after." * The ballad alluded to is, The Chronicle; but it is so obviously a work of fancy, filled with a list of fictitious mistresses, that it is improbable Cowley would have closed such a catalogue raisonée of mere idle, and not very chaste amours, with an actual and pure passion, unless he meant to pay the real Leonora the substantial compliment of having put all the others out of his head. There is enough of reason, however, to believe, that Cowley was a disappointed man, and that the lady, whoever she was, had a large share in the gloom that lay upon his spirits at Chertsy.

He did not long survive his letter of grievances to Sprat, his death having taken place at the Porch-House, towards the west end of Chertsy, on July 28. 1667, in the forty-ninth year of his age. According to the biography of his friend, he seemed to have been nearly recovered from the consuming disease under which he had been labouring for some months, when, in the heat of

* Spence's Anecdotes.

summer, staying too long in the meadows with his labourers, he was seized with a violent stoppage in the breast and throat. At first he regarded it as an ordinary cold, and refused to send for medical advice until it was too late, and after a fortnight's illness it proved fatal to him. Such is Sprat's account; but Pope gives a very different version of the immediate cause of his death, "which," he says, "was occasioned by mere accident, whilst his great friend, Dean Sprat, was with him on a visit. They had been together to see a neighbour of Cowley's, who (according to the fashion of those times) made them too welcome. They did not set out for their walk home till it was too late; and had drank so deep, that they lay out in the fields all night. This gave Cowley the fever that carried him off. The parish still talk of the drunken dean."* Possibly the "drunken dean" might have been the neighbour whose dangerous hospitality led to such a fatal issue (if the story be true), for Cowley, in his letter to Sprat, promises his friend some merriment on St. Ann's Hill, with the Dean; or, perhaps, the "Dean" in Cowley's letter was no other than Sprat himself, who might have been thus socially distinguished from his other self in his festive moments. But that Cowley should have thus come by his mortal sickness, is a circumstance so inconsistent with the whole tenour of his life, that we may justifiably express an unwillingness to believe in its truth. Both statements agree on this point, that it was in the fields he caught his last illness; and perhaps the tradition was magnified from one to another, until at length it descended to Pope in the aggravated shape in which he related it to Spence. All this is probable enough; and then there was Sprat's narrative, with which Pope was acquainted, and which nobody had ventured to contradict, although Cowley was not so free of enemies as that somebody might not have been found to retail so piquant a scandal had it transpired at the

* Spence's Anecdotes.

time. On the whole, I am disposed to discredit the anecdote, partly because it calls in question the circumstantial veracity of Sprat (to say nothing of his morals) which had not been implicated before, and partly because in such scraps of personal history Pope had a malicious way of putting things in the worst light, without caring much about the credibility of his informants.

The funeral of the poet was conducted with extraordinary splendour. Whatever neglect he may have suffered from his friends at court, during the latter part of his life, they seem to have been anxious to repair it upon this last occasion of testifying the regard in which they held him. And when it is taken into consideration that men who hold high offices and station are widely separated, in every-day affairs, from men of genius who haunt in comparative obscurity the private walks of life, and who cannot always, even if they would, maintain a constant intercourse with nobility, thus much at least must be allowed, that every token of respect and sympathy which rank pays to genius is something gained in the end towards a better understanding of their respective rights and honours. In a country like England, where wealth and hereditary titles occupy so large a space of vulgar homage and individual ambition, it is hopeless to expect that mere merit, unsustained by the one or the other, can ever climb to an equality with the upper ranks, or keep itself there, if any oblique accident should cast it so high. Nor is it desirable that such an association should be rendered easy or common. The lofty mission of genius can be effectually pursued only through a course of independence: the virtues of communities, the liberties of nations, the maintenance of justice, and the sacred defence of truth, depend upon the freedom, and perhaps too something on the sufferings, of those whose talents place them in advance of their age. It is enough for nobility, now and then, to acknowledge the power and supremacy of mind, even if it be over the "new-made grave:" much more is not likely to be obtained, except at a

greater cost than martyrdom itself; and less would impeach the equity of the providence that made men what they are.

Evelyn, who attended Cowley's funeral, affords us a few brief particulars of the procession. On the 1st of August he heard of his decease, and on the 3d witnessed his interment. We give his own words as we find them in his diary—expressed with a most affecting simplicity:—

"1 Aug. I receiv'd the sad news of Abr. Cowley's death, that incomparable poet and virtuous man, my very deare friend.

"3. Went to Mr. Cowley's funerall; his corpse lay at Wallingford House, and was thence convey'd to Westmr Abby in a hearse with 6 horses and all funeral decency, neere an hundred coaches of noblemen and persons of qualitie following; among these all the witts of the towne, divers bishops and clergymen. He was interr'd next Geffry Chaucer and neere Spenser."

Eight years afterwards a monument was erected to his memory by the duke of Buckingham, upon which was inscribed an epitaph in Latin, written by Dr. Sprat.

Few men were ever held in more sincere esteem, not only by those who knew him well, but by those who knew him only through his productions, than Abraham Cowley. His works, for the thirty years immediately following his death, passed through innumerable editions; but after that time they were rarely revived, owing to the changes that took place in the public taste. Of the amiable personal character of Cowley, we have so many concurring testimonies from so many different quarters, that it must be concluded he was a man of the most perfect natural goodness. He was a passionate lover of liberty, of a firm and generous temper, modest even to reserve, and so little ambitious of fame himself, or jealous of the reputation of others, that his closest friends could rarely lead him in conversation to the subject of his own writings, or draw out into controversies the rich resources of his mind. He seems, indeed, to have been

of so retiring a habit in society, that sir John Denham ridiculed him in a lampoon for being an indifferent talker. The moderation of his life, throughout all the fluctuating, and trying circumstances in which he was placed, exhibited a striking example of philosophical equanimity; and king Charles did not exceed the measure of his worth when, on hearing of his death, he exclaimed that he "had not left behind him a better man in England."

EDMUND WALLER.

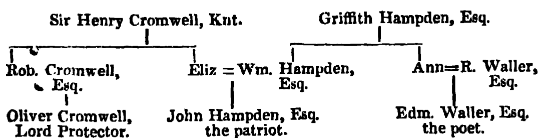
(1605—1687.)

The Wallers, from whom the subject of this biography was descended, were an ancient family in Kent, which country they appear to have furnished with sheriffs from the time of Henry VI. to the breaking out, or thereabouts, of the civil war. The family history is full of such legends as are to be found only in the domestic collections of the old English houses, transmitting the unimpaired honours of the stock with constant regularity from father to son through successive generations. One of his ancestors distinguished himself by his prowess at the battle of Agincourt, when he took the duke of Orleans prisoner, and, bringing him home to England, retained him on his parole, at his residence near Spendhurst, for a term of four and twenty years; another accumulated a vast estate of 7000*l.* per annum, which was equal in those days to what we should now account a princely revenue; and a third, with, however, a reduced fortune, was a parliament general in the reign of Charles I.; and they were all persons of high probity and elevated condition, endowing churches, and founding institutions, and outliving the perishing fables of their munificence in monumental stones and trophied records.

The branch of the family to which the poet belonged had, at some period not very long before his birth, removed into Buckinghamshire. His father, Robert Waller, Esq., had been educated for the law, and even commenced the practice of that profession; but growing weary, perhaps of its laboriousness, retired early from the bar to enjoy the ease of a country life, of which he became weary in turn on account of its idleness. He

was married to the aunt of the celebrated Hampden*; and appears to have cultivated his property with such frugality and skill as to leave his son a clear estate of 3500*l.* per annum. Edmund Waller was born at a place called Coleshill, in Hertfordshire, on the 3d of March, 1605; and his father dying while he was an infant, the care of his youth devolved solely on his mother.†

A distant relationship has been traced between Waller, Hampden, and Cromwell, which has escaped notice, we believe, in all the biographies of the poet. Oliver used to call Waller (when they were on terms), by the familiar title of cousin, designating his mother (who was a zealous royalist), aunt; but as such modes of address were common in those times amongst persons who were not even remotely connected, it was regarded as a mere fashion of course. There did exist, however, a degree of relationship between the poet, the protector, and the patriot, which is thus set forth in a work published towards the close of the last century.‡



Notwithstanding this relationship, however, and the free intercourse that existed amongst them, Oliver was not

* A strange mistake has crept into all the biographical accounts extant respecting the relationship between Waller's mother and Hampden the patriot. Following the accounts which he found in print, Dr. Johnson says that the lady was the sister of John Hampden. The same statement is made in the *Biog. Brit.*, and in all other publications that are considered respectable authorities. Yet it is clear enough that she was his aunt, as will be presently shown. But it is still more extraordinary, that the work to which we are indebted for this correction, should adopt in its narrative the very statement which, in a genealogical table, it proves to be erroneous.

† Wood places the date of Waller's birth later in the month, and assigns it to the place in Buckinghamshire, where his father held his estate. But the statement adopted above agrees with the life published in the original edition of Waller's poems, and with the inscription on his monument, and Wood's account is not given upon his own authority, but upon that of an "ancient acquaintance."

‡ Memoirs of the Protectoral House of Cromwell, quoted by Bliss.

disposed to let the pleasant humour of his speech interfere with his political safety.* It is related of Mrs. Waller that she did not attempt to disguise her sentiments from Cromwell, even when he was at the height of his power, and that she used to tell him, half in jest and half in earnest, that things would one day or another revert to their own channels, and leave him and his friends in ruin. On these occasions, Cromwell would playfully snatch up a towel (which would tempt us to suspect that these dangerous sallies of the lady used to take place after dinner), and, throwing it at her, exclaim, "Well, well, aunt, I will not dispute the matter with you." But when Oliver found her zeal was more serious than he had suspected, and that she was actually in league and correspondence with the royalists, he deprived her of her liberty, and placed her under the close charge of one of her daughters, who was married to Price, a fierce parliamentarian. There was no more throwing of towels, and calling aunt, and Mrs. Waller was fortunate that it was no worse.

Edmund Waller was educated at Eton, from whence he was removed at an early age to King's College, Cambridge. The rapid progress he made in both places is said to have procured him, while he was yet a boy, so much reputation, that he was solicited, at the age of sixteen, to represent the borough of Agmondesham in parliament. The right of that borough to send members to the House of Commons had been in suspense since the reigns of Edward I. and II., but it appears that it was not unusual in such cases to allow representatives to take their seats *sub silentio.* It is not very easy to comprehend the utility of this method of representation, nor are we accurately informed as to the duties required of a representative under such circumstances, nor as to the nature of the privileges enjoyed by such representatives, if, indeed, they enjoyed any at all. But there is no doubt that Waller sat in parliament for this suspended borough, although we have no evidence of what he did there. Much could

not have been expected from a member *sub silentio*, and still less from a boy of sixteen years of age.

It may be reasonably inferred that he was more indebted to his property for this honour than to his talents. That vivacity of intellect which youth sometimes discovers in the acquisition of elementary knowledge, is not the kind of power which is looked for, or likely to be serviceable, in a member of parliament. But while men have always been hard to please in the moral fitness of their representatives, they have seldom disagreed about their property qualifications. An estate has always constituted a sufficient test of capability, and, notwithstanding the advance that has been made towards the full recognition of the principle of popular election, the estate is now nearly as conclusive of a candidate's merits as it was in the reign of James I.

If Waller did not make a conspicuous figure in parliament at this period, he was at all events well received at court. He belonged to an old family and was a wit, and it may be presumed had a graceful way of making the best of his accomplishments. Such a person was almost sure of becoming a favourite, and accordingly we find him a frequent visiter at the palace, during the term of the first parliament in which he sat, which was the third of James I. A curious anecdote of a conversation he heard at court on the day of the dissolution of that parliament, is related in the original sketch of his life published with the first complete edition of his works, and as it has been considered of sufficient interest to be inserted in all the subsequent biographies, it cannot be omitted here. It is as follows in the words of the writer.

"He (Waller) found Dr. Andrews, bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Neale, bishop of Durham, standing behind his majesty's chair; and there happened something very extraordinary in the conversation these prelates had with the king, on which Mr. Waller did often reflect. His majesty asked the bishops, 'My lords, cannot I take my subjects' money when I want

it, without all this formality of parliament?' The bishop of Durham readily answered, 'God forbid, sir, but you should; you are the breath of our nostrils!' whereupon the king turned and said to the bishop of Winchester, 'Well, my lord, what say you?' 'Sir,' replied the bishop, 'I have no skill to judge of parliamentary cases.' The king answered, 'No put-offs, my lord; answer me presently.' 'Then, sir,' said he, 'I think it is lawful for you to take my brother Neale's money, for he offers it.' Mr. Waller said the company was pleased with this answer, and the wit of it seemed to affect the king; for, a certain lord coming in soon after, his majesty cried out, 'Oh, my lord, they say you lig with my lady.' 'No, sir,' said his lordship in confusion, 'but I like her company, because she has so much wit.' 'Why, then,' says the king, 'do you not lig with my lord of Winchester there?'"

What Waller discovered in this 'conversation' to reflect often upon, is not very obvious unless it be the coarseness and the would-if-he-could disposition of the king, which hardly required such an illustration.

In the ensuing parliament convened in February 1624, the electors of Agmondesham, weary of the *sub silentio* system, petitioned the house for the restitution of their lapsed right to return two members, which was granted to them. But upon this occasion, they appear to have exercised more discrimination than upon the former. It is not known whether Waller contested the election, but it is certain that he was not returned, two gentlemen who had drawn up the petition for the borough, and enforced it at the bar, having been chosen in his place. He was not long, however, without a seat, being elected for Chipping Wycombe, another borough in Bucks, in the first parliament of Charles I., which met on the 18th of June, 1625, and afterwards for Agmondesham in March 1627.

The poetical genius of Waller was developed much earlier than his political. He wrote his first poem at eighteen years of age, and does not appear to have

taken any active part in public life until many years afterwards. His business in parliament in the beginning of his career, seems to have been limited to the disposal of his vote.

The first piece he produced was on the escape of the prince (afterwards Charles II.) in the road at St. Andero. The circumstance celebrated by this poem, is related by Clarendon. Few writers could have accomplished so fine and elaborate a compliment in verse, and out of so exhausted an incident as a tempest at sea, and the rescue of a boat; and none but one who had carefully studied the phrases and turns of courtly panegyric could have rendered the flattery so adroitly subservient to the poetry. The tone of this little composition gives elevation to the subject. Narrow as the compass is for such effects, the poet contrives to draw into it the magnificent machinery of gods and dolphins, creating a miniature heroic under the ribs of an every-day accident. But this was as much to be attributed to the refining spirit of the author, who rendered every thing he touched as exquisite as toil and an instinctive skill in versification could make it, as to the desire (which no doubt he felt) to offer a worthy panegyric to the future sovereign. Waller, however, may be excused for going into excess in his poetical tribute on this occasion, since so grave a man as Clarendon declares in sober prose that such was the popular delight at the safety of the prince that "the whole nation seemed for joy to go out beyond its own shores to meet him." We have no great reason to complain of the elegant extravagance of the poet, when the historian does not hesitate to commit such hyperboles as these.

It is claimed for this poem, by one of Waller's critics*, that it "may serve as a model for those who would succeed in panegyric," because it "illustrates a plain historical fact with all the graces of poetical fiction." This brief sentence opens to us the real

* Mr. Fenton.

nature of panegyric, the larger part of which belongs to the invention.

The verses on the prince were followed by lines on the queen's picture, distinguished by a similar profusion of images, employed to idealise her majesty's beauty and goodness, in the same careful and melodious style. Another court trifle was soon afterwards written upon the king's manner of receiving the news of Buckingham's death. The duke had been assassinated while the court was at Southwick, a seat of Mr. Daniel Norton; and his majesty was at prayers in the chapel when the intelligence was brought to him. Upon hearing what had happened, his majesty preserved his countenance unmoved until prayers were over, and then, retiring to his chamber, he flung himself upon his bed, and gave way to a passion of tears. The subject does not suggest much room for the imagination, but Waller, with his peculiar felicity, exalts the monarch's self-command into a god-like virtue; wonders how so much firmness and tenderness could be united in one nature, and concludes by supposing that Jove must have "compressed" some bright dame to have produced such "mixed divinity and love." The art with which these exorbitant flights are managed is consummate in its kind; but it is surprising that the poet did not apply it to worthier topics.

None of these small painfully-finished verses were given to the public at the time they were written. They were circulated perhaps in MS., or privately printed for the author's friends. Such short productions could scarcely have found their way into print in any other shape, unless they were published in the fugitive journals or miscellanies; which is unlikely. It was this circumstance probably led lord Clarendon to say that Waller did not apply himself to poetry until he was thirty years of age. His poems were not avowed and collected until that time, but many of them were written long before. Dr. Johnson detects two or three allusions to subsequent circumstances in the pieces referred to,

which induces him to infer that time was taken for their revision and improvement. That Waller wrote slowly, and amended sedulously what he wrote, cannot be doubted. He loitered a whole summer over some lines he inserted in a leaf of the "Duchess's Tasso," which would have approached nearer to what he intended them for, had he written them on the instant, and left them there. He devoted great labour to little things, and sometimes to things that were not worth any labour at all.

The principal ground upon which Waller is entitled to a distinguished place amongst the English poets is the extraordinary advance he made beyond all his contemporaries in the liquid smoothness of his versification. His excellence in this respect can hardly be appreciated as it deserves, except by a close comparison of his poems with those of others who lived and wrote at the same time. Dryden states, in the preface to the Fables that Milton had declared to him that Spencer was his original, and that many besides himself had heard "our famous Waller own that he derived the harmony of his numbers from the Godfrey of Bulloigne which was turned into English by Mr. Fairfax." Pope said that Fairfax was an imitator of Spencer; so that, in that case, both Milton and Waller drew their first inspiration from the same spring, only that the one went to the spring-head, and the other drank from the stream as it rippled through a translation. The merits of Fairfax's versions from the Italian are of a high order; but his originality as a poet may be questioned in all other respects. This, perhaps, will be found to assist us to a clearer view of the character of Waller's mind. He was charmed with the music of Fairfax, which lingered in his ears in his boyhood, and never ceased to affect him. This was the poetical quality that chiefly and permanently fascinated him; and he dwelt upon the sounds so earnestly, that they at last mingled with his thoughts, which took harmonious shapes as they were formed; and the first poem he wrote, at eighteen years of age, was as

perfect in structure, as the last, which he wrote at eighty.

A poet thus absorbingly devoted to the cultivation of metre could hardly have courage enough to extend the sphere of his contemplations. The apprehension of sacrificing the graces of composition to the weightier demands of an extensive theme would naturally confine him to such topics as would least divert him from the workmanship of his lines. It might be anticipated, therefore, that his poetry would adapt itself to the process of production, and that as he aimed solely at the lightest elegance in the design, his materials would be correspondingly delicate. Waller may be said to have wrought with the finest gold, and to have brought *filagree* to perfection.

The slight poetical effusions he had as yet written could scarcely have made much impression, nor were they at first much known beyond the immediate circles to which the fastidious author communicated them. He seems to have begun life in all his characters of politician, poet, and lover, at a very early age, and nearly simultaneously. In parliament at sixteen, a court poet at eighteen, he became a husband at one or two and twenty. This circumstance brought him into immediate notice, for the affair had something of the gallantry of an adventure in it, and speedily obtained notoriety. The lady was the daughter and heiress of Mr. Banks, a rich merchant in the city, and her fortune was so large as to render the struggle for her hand an undertaking of some difficulty. The court itself stooped to propitiate her in favour of a Mr. Crofts, but Waller intercepted the powerful influence that was at work for his rival, and carried off the prize. Nothing more is related concerning the lady, who did not survive her marriage many years; but she lived long enough to leave Waller a wealthy widower at twenty-five, with a son, who died young, and a daughter who was afterwards married to a gentleman of Oxfordshire.

Previously to the death of Mrs. Waller, the poet

made the acquaintance of Dr. Morley, who was afterwards bishop of Winchester, and who was, it is now impossible to ascertain upon what authority, said to be a son of Ben Jonson. There are two contradictory statements about his intimacy with Morley; lord Clarendon asserting that Morley introduced him into that select society of which the lords Falkland, Chillingworth, Godolphin, and Clarendon himself, were members; and the biographer of the first edition affirming that it was his connection with that society which was the accidental cause of his being introduced to Morley. According to the latter (which is the more probable of the two, as Waller must have been already known to those distinguished persons, in consequence of his admission to court), a noise was heard in the street at one of the meetings of the club, which they were told was occasioned by the arrest of a son of Ben Jonson. They immediately sent for him, and Waller was so much taken with him that he gave him 100*l.* to procure his liberation, and afterwards invited him to his house in the country, where he remained several years as director and assistant in his studies. After the breaking up of the parliament in 1628, and during the long intermission that ensued, Waller retired to Beconsfield, and is reported to have applied himself arduously to the perusal of the ancient authors. But this fit of seclusion did not last long: he wanted an object for his verses; and having expended all his tears upon his wife, he now looked round for some idol to whom he could dedicate his tenderness. Such a person he discovered in the lady Dorothea Sidney, eldest daughter of the earl of Leicester. In the language of his first biographer, he "presently conceived a most ardent passion" for this lady, and proceeded to enamel her beauties and her disdain in votive poetry, under the name of Sacharissa. It admits of a rational doubt whether Waller's attachment to lady Dorothea ever amounted to any thing more than a floating sentiment—a pretext for weaving that description of verse which can be accomplished better by

the imagination than the heart. He appears to have been staying at Penshurst, and to have imbibed in that beautiful solitude the feelings he has rendered immortal in his poems. The associations of the place were well calculated to move such emotions in him, and perhaps he and lady Dorothea may have been at first thrown much together, for lord Leicester was deeply occupied with public affairs, and was at one period absent in France, a fact to which Waller alludes in some lines addressed to him. Then there were many circumstances to give that particular direction to his thoughts: —the charms of a storied scene, of which the lady Dorothea was then the chief embellishment—the admission to an intimacy which, at his age, and so placed, could hardly produce any other result, and which, if it even made no impression upon his affections, could hardly fail to disturb his vanity—and the link of childhood, the most dangerous of all, which subsisted between him and the proud Sacharissa in the person of her young sister, the lady Lucy, that "fairest blossom," through whom he might pay homage in disguise, trusting to the true interpretation of every word bestowed upon her "dawning beauty." Feelings thus springing up in the depths of a patrician retreat easily make indelible channels in the mind, which leave their traces long after the spell that produced them has lost its magic. The shadowy paths and green recesses of Penshurst were not likely to be forgotten soon, and the dream that was mingled with them once, transient as it might have been, was prolonged to the fancy of the poet by a thousand images of tranquil joy and feverish hope. Had there been no Penshurst, there would probably have been no Sacharissa. We dissipate in the excitement of crowds the fluttering passions which crowds have generated; but we cannot so readily divorce ourselves from sentiments that have grown up in silent places hallowed by the peace of nature.

But all this is purely conjectural. We judge of Waller's devotion by the laborious character of the

verse in which he celebrates it, which perhaps, he could not help; and by the versatility of his addresses to other beauties, which he could. No man is required, as a proof of his sincerity, to forsake the world because the woman he loves is indifferent to him, or because she deceives him; but it may be doubted whether he ever felt real love who he professes to have felt it often.

Of Sacharissa's power to enchant a lover into such ecstacies as Waller experienced, or feigned, no evidence remains but that of Waller himself, which is at least questionable. Her picture, which still hangs in the gallery at Penshurst, disappoints the ideal which we might be tempted to form of her personal attractions. She appears to have been a blonde beauty of large proportions, with yellow hair, and full eyes, a languishing expression, mixed with a dangerous energy of temper, and of a coarse voluptuousness in her figure, and a haughty boldness in her features, not quite reconcileable with the persevering adoration of the poet. Yet we get glimpses of her character and appearance in his verses, which, making allowances for the exaggerations of the lover, have a tolerably accurate agreement with the tone of the painting. He calls her the "bright dame;" worships her as the Persian worships the sun, not daring to advance his "dazzled sight" to look upon her; calls hear a "stern goddess;" speaks of her "high disdain;" and says, which is neither very complimentary nor very elegant by the way, that

"Her eyes, her teeth, her lip, excels
All that is found in mines or fishes' shells;"

and this description, in which sensual brilliancy and lofty contempt are blended into a somewhat disagreeable portrait, might be attached with propriety to the likeness at Penshurst. It is not known whether Sacharissa at any time encouraged the addresses of Waller, but it is certain that she at last rejected them with scorn. The probability is that she was a coquet on a large scale, a

woman of great pride where it suited her occasions; that she permitted Waller to make verses on her as long as it answered her purpose to have such notoriety as he could produce; and that, when a *bonne partie* offered, she spurned the poet with more contempt than was necessary, for the sake of showing that she never entertained his suit. She married the earl of Sunderland in 1639, and lost him in the king's service: afterwards, in 1652, she was married to Mr. Robert Smith. Waller's conduct on the former occasion redeems much of the weakness of his previous pursuit of a hopeless object. Hearing of her marriage, he wrote to her sister, the lady Lucy; and as the letter is altogether as curious for its artificial play of sentiments as his poetry, but with a healthier sentiment pervading it, justice to the deserted poet requires its insertion here.

"MADAM,—In the common joy at Penshurst, I know none to whom complaints may come less unseasonable than to your ladyship; the loss of a bedfellow being almost equal to that of a mistress; and therefore, you ought at least to pardon, if you consent not to the imprecations of the deserted, which just heaven no doubt will hear.

"May my lady Dorothy, if we may yet call her so, suffer as much, and have the like passion for this young lord whom she has preferr'd to the rest of mankind, as others have had for her; and may his love, before the year go about, make her taste of the first curse imposed on womankind, the pains of becoming a mother!

"May her first-born be none of her own sex, nor so like her, but that he may resemble her lord as much as herself.

"May she, that always affected silence and retiredness, have the house filled with the noise and number of her children, and hereafter of her grandchildren; and then may she arrive at that great curse so much declined by fair ladies, old age! May she live to be very old, and yet seem young; be told so by her glass, and

have no aches to inform her of the truth; and when she shall appear to be mortal, may her lord not mourn for her, but go hand in hand with her to that place where we are told there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage; that being there divorced, we may all have an equal interest in her again! My revenge being immortal, I wish all this may also befall their posterity to the world's end, and afterwards!

"To you, madam, I wish all good things; and that this loss may in good time be happily supplied by a more constant bedfellow of the other sex.

"Madam, I humbly kiss your hands, and beg pardon for this trouble from your ladyship's most humble servant. "E. WALLER."

Waller was either the best-natured man alive, or his forgiveness was of no more value than his love. It would be perfectly consistent with a noble and honourable nature to desire the happiness of a woman who had slighted him; but such a desire would be expressed with more seriousness if the passion had been real. The raillery of this letter, which is none of the most refined, has rather the effect of throwing distrust over all that had happened before. A lover who could fall into this mood of taking a jocular revenge upon his mistress for marrying another can hardly be supposed ever to have resigned his heart, unless his affections and his wit were equally elastic. Waller and Sacharissa never saw each other afterwards, until both had grown very old, when they met accidentally at Woburn at lady Wharton's. The memory of their youth had not yet faded from either; and Sacharissa, as if she could still jest with his passion, as she was wont to do, asked him, "When, Mr. Waller, will you write such fine verses on me again?" To which Waller replied, as if he still felt her scorn, "Oh! madam, when your ladyship is as young again!"

In the poem written at Penshurst, supposed to have been the last addressed to Sacharissa, Waller threatens

the lady with leaving the country, as if, taking it for granted that she was really tired of his importunities, she would not be glad to get rid of him. He complains to Apollo, whom, by a sort of parliamentary figure, he designates the "president of verse;" and the god desires him to seek consolation in exile.

"'On yon aged tree
"Hang up thy lute, and hie thee to the sea,
That there with wonders thy diverted mind
Some truce, at least, may with this passion find.'
Oh! cruel nymph! from whom her humble swain
Flies for relief unto the raging main,
And from the winds and tempests does expect
A milder fate than from her cold neglect!"

It is not to be wondered at that, in an age when men were expected to be very differently occupied, Sacharissa—a woman of the line of the heroic Sidneys—should have spurned a lover who appealed in this pitiful way to her compassion, and even attempted to work upon her fears. The next step in this dismal and unmanly course would have been to have raised an alarm of suicide, in the faint hope that if she could not return his love she would at least save his life. Whether he followed the advice of Apollo is doubtful. Coupling the above lines with his poem on the battle of the Summer Islands, of which he was said to have been a proprietor, it is conjectured that at this time he paid a visit to the Bermudas; but the want of some better proof of the fact compels us to conclude that he diverted his mind, not with a trip to America, but with a new passion.

He makes love to so many ladies in his verses that we can hardly believe he kept his allegiance long to any; and, to mend the matter, his biographers assure us that they were all true women, and not beings of his imagination. The principal object of his vacillating affections was Amoret, in whose milder beams he is said to have taken refuge from the scorn of Sacharissa; but if there be any truth in his own poetical evidence,

he was in love with them both at the same time, and hardly knew which to choose. To Amoret he says—

"I will tell you how I do
Sacharissa love and you.
Joy salutes me when I set
My blest eyes on Amoret;
But with wonder I am struck
While I on the other look."

Again, he declares that his passion for Sacharissa is forlorn admiration rather than love.

"'Tis amazement more than love
Which her radiant eyes do move:
If less splendour wait on thine,
Yet they so benignly shine;
I would turn my dazzled sight
To behold their milder light."

And he concludes by promising Amoret that, if she will only smile upon him, he will be faithful to her.

"Then smile on me, and I will prove
Wonder is shorter lived than love."

A gentleman who addressed such phrases as these to two ladies at the same time, might have been accounted by all the women with whom he conversed a man of gallantry, but no woman of sense could have admitted him as a lover. Amoret has been discovered by Mr. Fenton, whose statement rests on the authority of the duke of Buckingham, to have been the lady Sophia Murray; but who Chloris, Sylvia, Phillis, Flavia, and the rest were, has never transpired.

Waller does not appear to have indulged very long, even in the semblance of despair; for finding himself deserted by Sacharissa, without being successful with Amoret, he settled quietly down into a second marriage. It is a curious illustration of the immortality conferred by poetry upon a sentimental attachment, while the actual affairs of life are suffered to fade into oblivion, that

Sacharissa is still remembered in her pride, her beauty, and her fortunes, while nothing more is known of Waller's wife but that her name was Bresse or Breaux, and that she brought her husband a large family of children.

In the interval that elapsed between the parliament of 1628 and the revival, as it may be called, of parliaments, in 1640, Waller cultivated literature with considerable industry, although he produced but little; coming out only occasionally with a few stanzas upon some public event, such as the repairing of the courts, the navy, the reduction of Sallée, &c.; but circumstances now called him to more active duties. Upon the summoning of that parliament, which sat from the 13th of April to the end of March, and which is familiarly designated the short parliament, he was chosen a second time for Agmondesham. Great expectations were naturally formed as to the line of conduct he would adopt. His fortune rendered him entirely independent of the court; and as he had hitherto maintained a free intercourse with the most distinguished men of all parties, it was believed that he would at least exhibit unimpeachable integrity in whatever position he took up. There was something calculated upon by the people from his relationship to Hampden. He fully justified the confidence that was reposed in him. The first great question that came to be debated was the granting the supplies, and Waller supported the refusal of the supplies until the grievances of which the nation complained should be redressed. This principle is consonant with all our notions of civil liberty, and is the very foundation of the compact between the sovereign and the people. To assert it upon weak grounds would be to impair its utility by exposing it to abuse, and Waller acutely discriminated in his speech between the necessity that existed for reverting to it, and that factious spirit which would, in its name, overthrow the monarchy. The long suspension of parliament afforded serious cause of complaint, and no measures could, or

ought, to appease the just resentment of the country, but such as should make ample reparation for so tyrannical a procedure. Waller therefore demanded a redress of grievances first; and urged it the more speedily, that they might the sooner come to the consideration of the supply. In his argument, while he maintained his views of the rights of the subject with firmness, he treated the king with marked respect. "That the person of no king," he said, "was ever better beloved of his people, and that no people were ever more unsatisfied with the ways of levying monies, are two truths which may serve one to demonstrate the other; for such is their aversion to the present courses, that neither the admiration they have of his majesty's native inclinations to justice and clemency, nor the pretended consent of the judges, could make them willingly submit themselves to this late tax of ship-money; and such is their natural love and just esteem of his majesty's goodness, that no late pressure could provoke them, nor any example invite them, to disloyalty and disobedience.'

The whole conflict between the king and parliament now resolved itself into the ship-money question. The parliament was instantly dissolved, and in the following November another, memorable in our annals as the long parliament, was convened; when Waller, who had obtained great popularity by his conduct on the motion for the supplies, was elected a third time for the borough of Agmondesham. The part he had already taken in opposition to the court procured him so much distinction that he was chosen by the commons to manage the impeachment of judge Crawley, who, along with other judges, had incurred universal odium on account of the activity he displayed in support of the exorbitant demands of the king. The responsible situation in which Waller thus found himself placed, together with the indignation he felt at the unconstitutional treatment his cousin Hampden had suffered, rendered him more than usually anxious and energetic;

and his speech upon this occasion was no less remarkable for its eloquence, than for its boldness.* The

* This speech (of which 20,000 copies are said to have been sold in a single day) deserves to be rescued from oblivion. It is worthy, for its earnestness and power, of being preserved with the speeches of Pym. Dr. Johnson suppresses it in his life of Waller, but at the same time gives Waller's speech in favour of a church establishment. Had he desired to deal fairly with the political opinions of the speaker, he ought to have inserted both or neither. As any life of Waller would be defective in a main point if these speeches were wholly omitted, specimens from both are here submitted to the reader. Upon the impeachment of judge Crawley, after a general acknowledgement of the respect due to the office of a judge, Waller proceeded thus: — "But as all professions are obnoxious to the malice of the professors, and by them most easily betrayed, so, my lords, these articles have told you how these brothers of the coif are become *fratres in malo;* how these sons of the law have torn out the bowels of their mother. But this judge, whose charge you last heard, in one expression of his exceeds no less these his fellows than they have done the worst of their predecessors, in this conspiracy against the commonwealth. Of the judgment for ship-money, and those extra-judicial opinions preceding the same (wherein they are jointly concerned), you have already heard; how unjust and pernicious a proceeding that was in so public a cause has been sufficiently expressed to your lordships. But this man, adding despair to our misery, tells us from the bench, that ship-money was a right so inherent in the crown that it would not be in the power of an act of parliament to take it away. Herein, my lords, he did not only give as deep a wound to the commonwealth as any of the rest, but dipt his dart in such a poison, that, so far as in him lay, it might never receive a cure. As by these abortive opinions subscribing to the subversion of our property before he heard what could be said for it, he prevented his own; so, by this declaration of his, he endeavours to prevent the judgment of your lordships too, and to confine the power of a parliament, the only place where this mischief might be redressed. Sure he is more wise and learned than to believe himself in this opinion, or not to know how ridiculous it would appear to parliament, and how dangerous to himself; and, therefore, no doubt but by saying no parliament could abolish this judgment, his meaning was, that this judgment had abolished parliaments.

"The imposition of ship-money, springing from a pretended necessity, was it not enough that it was now grown annual, but he must entail it upon the state for ever, at once making a necessity inherent to the crown, and slavery to the subject? Necessity which, dissolving all law, is so much the more prejudicial to his majesty than to any of us, by how much the law has invested his royal state with a greater power and ampler fortune. for so undoubted a truth it has ever been, that kings as well subjects are involved in the confusion which necessity produces, that the heathens thought their gods also obliged by the same. *Pareamus necessitati, quam nec homines nec Dii superant.* This judge, then, having in his charge at the assize declared the dissolution of the law by this supposed necessity, with what conscience could he at the same assize proceed to condemn and punish men, unless perhaps he meant the law was still in force for our destruction, and not for our preservation; that it should have power to kill, but none to protect us; a thing no less horrid than if the sun should burn without lighting us, or the earth serve only to bury, and not to feed and nourish us."

The ingenuity, strength, and closeness of the speech, may be seen from this passage. His speech upon the question whether episcopacy ought to be abolished, exhibits similar qualities of excellence; but from the nature of its subject, being opposed to, instead of supporting, popular cla-

times were full of peril and excitement. The impeachment of the chancellor and of Strafford were events of

mour, it is on the whole more temperate, and perhaps more strictly argumentative.

"There is no doubt but the sense of what this nation had suffered from the present bishops hath produced these complaints; and the apprehensions men have of suffering the like in time to come make so many desire the taking away of episcopacy; but I conceive it is possible that we may not now take a right measure of the minds of the people by their petitions; for when they subscribed them the bishops were armed with a dangerous commission of making new canons, imposing new oaths, and the like; but now we have disarmed them of that power. These petitioners did lately look upon episcopacy as a beast armed with horns and claws; but now that we have cut and pared them (and may, if we see cause, yet reduce it into narrower bounds), it may, perhaps, be more agreeable. Howsoever, if they be still in passion, it becomes us whereby to consider the right use and antiquity thereof, and not to comply further with a general desire than may stand with a general good.

"We have already showed that episcopacy, and the evils thereof, are mingled like water and oil; we have also, in part, severed them; but I believe you will find that our laws and the present government of the church are mingled like wine and water; so inseparable, that the abrogation of at least a hundred of our laws is desired in these petitions. I have often heard a noble answer of the lords, commended in this house, to a proposition of like nature, but of less consequence; they gave no other reason of their refusal but this, *nolumus mutare leges Angliæ;* it was the bishops who so answered then, and it would become the dignity and wisdom of this house to answer the people now with a *nolumus mutare.*

"I see some are involved with a number of hands against the bishops; which I confess, rather inclines me to their defence; for I look upon episcopacy as a counterscarp, or outwork; which, if it be taken by this assault of the people, and withal, this mystery once revealed, *that we must deny them nothing when they ask it thus in troops,* we may, in the next place, have as hard a task to defend our property as we have lately had to recover it from the prerogative. If, by multiplying hands to petitions, they prevail for an equality in things ecclesiastical, the next demand perhaps may be *lex agraria,* the like equality in things temporal.

"The Roman story tells us that when the people began to flock about the senate, and were more curious to direct and know what was done, than to obey, that commonwealth soon came to ruin. Their *legem rogare* grew quickly to be a *legem ferre;* and after, when their legions had found that they could make a dictator, they never suffered the senate to have a voice any more in such election.

"If these great innovations proceed, I shall expect a flat and level in learning too, as well as in clerical preferments. *Honos alit artes.* And though it be true, that grave and pious men do study for learning's sake, and embrace virtue for itself, yet it is as true that youth, which is the season when learning is gotten, is not without ambition; nor will ever take pains to excel in any thing when there is not some hope of excelling others in reward and dignity.

"There are two reasons chiefly alleged against our church government:—First, Scripture, which, as some men think, points out another form:—Second, The abuses of the present superiors. In scripture, I will not dispute it in this place; but I am confident that whenever an equal division of lands and goods shall be desired, there will be as many places in scripture found out which seem to favour that as there are now alleged against the prelacy in preferment of the church. And, as for abuses, where you are now in the remonstrance told what this and that poor man hath suffered by the bishops, you may be presented with a thousand instances of

deep and thrilling interest, and it was as impossible to be calm in the midst of such agitations as to be neutral. Yet Waller preserved a moderation that appears at first to have acquired for him, in some degree, the confidence of both parties: for while he continued, during a period of three years, to vote upon all vital points against the government, he still maintained a good understanding with the principal persons about the court. There is some perplexity in Waller's conduct throughout this interval that cannot be satisfactorily cleared up. He all along seems to have held well with the king; and there is an anecdote of the king having sent to him, when he wanted subsidies to pay off the army, with a request that he would support him; when Waller, finding that sir Harry Vane objected to the supply in the first instance, as he found that the king would not accept it, unless it reached the amount he required, earnestly urged sir Thomas Jermyn, the comptroller of the household, to save his master from the effects of such an error; "for," said he, "I am but a country gentleman, and cannot pretend to know the king's mind." But sir Thomas was afraid to convey Waller's advice to his majesty; and the earl of St. Albans afterwards declared that sir Thomas's cowardice ruined

poor men that have received hard measure from their landlords; and of worldly goods abused, to the injury of others, and disadvantage of the owners.

"And, therefore, Mr. Speaker, my humble motion is that we may settle men's minds herein; and by a question declare our resolution to reform, that is, not to abolish, episcopacy."

The discrepancy of tone and doctrine between this speech and the former cannot fail to excite attention. In the one the right of the parliament to carry out the wishes of the nation to an unlimited extent is insisted on; in the other the maintenance of the church against the wishes of the nation is advocated, not with equal warmth, but with deeper sophistry. This was the stain on Waller's political character. He wanted not consistency in the ordinary sense, but a true conviction of the doctrines he espoused, and did not go far enough to render them effectual. He had neither enthusiasm nor courage, and not feeling deeply, he wavered in action. As to the apprehension that if the people succeeded in one demand, it would only encourage them to press another, it has been the bugbear of all timid politicians in all times; and it has been so often refuted by events, that the wonder is, that any person should be found to entertain it. The people never can have any interest subversive of reason and justice: and if any such should ever be set, it must explode of itself.

the king. This friendly interference to discover to the king the temper of the opposition would be wholly irreconcileable with Waller's conduct on the very question at issue, were it not that all throughout these conflicts he invariably maintained his allegiance to the sovereign, which he did not consider incompatible with the advocacy of popular rights, and resistance to the encroachments of the crown. In his speech upon the supply he throws all the blame upon ministers, carefully separating the person of the king from censure and responsibility. This doctrine was no doubt strictly constitutional; but in the circumstances in which the country came to be placed, between the desperate turbulence of the puritans, and the rash obstinacy of Charles, the whole contest at last resolved itself into a personal question. It was not merely that the prerogatives of the sovereign should be resisted, but that the sovereign himself should be coerced. Constitutional theories in such a state of affairs were like painted figure-heads in a storm: the object was to save the vessel; there was time enough afterwards to repair its embellishments.

At last the war openly broke out between the king and the parliament, and Waller, as might be expected, joined lord Dorset and the neuters, and absented himself from the house. In a few days, however, having made a communication with his majesty, and obtained leave to resume his seat (which he seems to have considered necessary, as though it was his majesty's pleasure he was to consult as a member of parliament, and not the interests and wishes of the people he represented), he returned, and continued to attend in his place until the detection of the plot. His attachment to the king increased with his embarrassments, and when his majesty set up his standard at Nottingham, on the 22d of August, 1642, Waller sent him 1000 broad pieces. Nor were these the only services he rendered to his sovereign; for not conceiving that he entirely discharged his duty by affording his majesty pecuniary help, and urging others to do the same, he spoke with great free-

dom upon all occasions in the house, opposing the extreme measures even of his own friends. Clarendon confirms this fact; adding, that when some of the absenting members alleged that the reason why they did not come to the house was because they were not suffered to declare their feelings freely, it was objected to them, that "it was a groundless pretext, when all men knew what liberties Mr. Waller took, and spoke every day with impunity against the sense and proceedings of the house."

The openness of his conduct secured him friends at both sides. Even the parliament reposed so much confidence in his integrity that they appointed him one of the commissioners to present proposals of peace to his majesty at Oxford, after the parliamentary troops had been defeated at Edge-hill. Waller was last in the order of precedence; and when he approached to kiss his majesty's hand, the king said to him, "Though you are the last, you are not the worst, nor the least in my favour." These words are supposed to have affected him so deeply as to induce him to join in a confederacy for the purpose of endeavouring to reinstate the king *; but, according to another authority, the words were spoken because Waller had already joined such a confederacy†. At all events, whether it was before or after, he embarked in an extensive design to oppose the parliament, with a view to bring this ruinous war to a conclusion.

The most authentic accounts that have appeared of this association, known by the name of Waller's Plot, agree in describing it as an organisation of well-affected persons for the establishment of peace, which they hoped to bring about by refusing to conform to the ordinances, or to contribute taxes for the support of the war. One of Waller's sisters was married to a Mr. Tomkins, who was clerk of the queen's council, and who was a gentleman of considerable influence and reputation in the city, especially amongst those who were disaffected to the

* Fenton. † Whitelock.

parliament. Tomkins, in the couse of his inquiries and observation, had discovered that there were a great number of persons of weight in London, who were well-disposed to declare against the proceedings of the commons, but that fear and the want of means of co-operation kept them silent; while Waller, on the other hand, knew those amongst the lords and commons who had the same opinions. They communicated together constantly, and mutually conveyed to their several friends the intentions and objects they entertained. It was hoped that some useful demonstration of public opinion might thus be procured by way of petition or otherwise, to discountenance the tumults that were destroying the repose of the kingdom, and that the commons might thus be rendered more moderate. The confederacy was, therefore, in its aim and agency, of a purely pacific character. But the chief movers in it do not seem to have adopted any distinct or effective course of action, until they were joined by lord Conway, who, coming over from Ireland full of ardour against the parliament, readily entered into the plan, and, being a military man, infused some strategical order into their operations. The utmost caution and secrecy pervaded the system of communication they employed; for, although they really entertained no design of a disturbing kind, they knew what they had to expect should their plans be betrayed before they were ripe. They accordingly appointed confidential persons in the different parishes and wards, to take a census of the inhabitants favourable and unfavourable to the parliament, so that they might infer the moral, by ascertaining the physical strength upon which they could calculate. Of course, these movements, when they were detected, had such an appearance of preparation for a different sort of demonstration, that it was not easy to vindicate the association from the charge of warlike intentions. For further security they prohibited more than three persons in their interest from meeting in one place, and nobody was allowed to communicate their design to more than two others. These

precautions, however, were all in vain. It happened, unluckily, at the same time, that sir Nicholas Crispe, a merchant in the city, and a devoted but impetuous adherent of the king, who had procured his majesty a loan of 100,000*l.*, and raised a regiment in his cause, and who thought, probably, that in consideration of these services, he had a right to advise the king in his extremity against his majesty's judgment, procured a commission of array, which he transmitted from Oxford to London, by the hands of the lady Aubigny (who did not know the nature of the instrument she carried), to be delivered by her to a gentleman appointed in the city for that purpose. Crispe's project was not only of a decidedly military character, but it embraced much wider ramifications than the plan to which Waller had lent his influence. Plate and voluntary contributions were to be collected by a Mr. Chaloner to aid the king; men were to be armed in various quarters; magazines were to be established; colours were to be in readiness at the gates of the city, in Cheapside, the Exchange, and other places; the king's children were to be taken in charge for safety; all the prisoners committed by the parliament were to be released; a declaration was to be issued, dispersed through the streets, and posted on the public walls, in favour of the prerogatives of the king, the preservation of religion, and, strangely enough, the liberties of the subject, and the privileges of the parliament; and, finally, the principal men of the lords and commons adverse to the king — Say, Wharton, Stapleton, Hampden, Strode, and Pym, were to be seized. In short, Crispe contemplated nothing more nor less than throwing open the city to the king's army, and surrounding the house of parliament once more with bayonets.* Waller's friends being already in motion,

* An account of this plot is given by Clarendon, and another by May, in his "History of the Parliament;" but the fullest is to be found in a rare tract, (the substance of which is printed in the Biog. Brit., vol. vii.) containing Pym's speech, delivered in a common hall held on the occasion in the city. The report was printed in 1643, with Pym's revisions, and is extracted in full in the appendix to Mr. Forster's "Life of Pym." Cabinet Cyc., Eminent British Statesmen, vol. iii.

and both parties being in the same interest, the two plans became inevitably intermixed; and although Waller did not countenance the extreme and ill-devised designs of Crispe, yet as both plots were discovered at the same moment, and as all the actors in them were involved directly or indirectly in a common purpose, he, as the most prominent person concerned, was regarded as the originator and head of the whole conspiracy.

There are two versions of the way in which these compound designs were discovered. According to a MS., written by a relation of Waller's, who lived in his house, and may, therefore, be supposed to have had authentic information, he was betrayed by his sister, Mrs. Price, (who was a zealous parliamentarian), and her chaplain, Good, who stole some of his papers; and worse would have happened but that Waller, dreaming in the night of his sister's unnatural baseness, hastily got out of bed, and burnt the rest of his papers in the remains of the fire in his chimney.* Lord Clarendon tells the story differently, attributing the discovery to the treachery of a servant of Tomkins, who, listening behind a hanging, overheard a conversation between Waller and his master of such treasonable matter that he immediately communicated it to Pym. Dr. Johnson suspects that Mrs. Price was the real informer; but that the men in power, receiving intelligence from the sister, employed the servant of Tomkins to listen at the conference, that they might avoid an act so offensive as that of destroying the brother by the sister's testimony. This mode of reconciling the two statements is more ingenious than probable, for the servant, who is thus presumed to have

* Almost all the members of Waller's family were on the side of the parliament. Two of his brothers fell in the Irish rebellion of 1641; a third was employed in Ireland by Oliver Cromwell, and was ancestor to the Wallers, baronets in that kingdom; a fourth was a colonel in the army of the parliament, but was made a sergeant-at-law on the restoration. One of his sisters was married to Adrian Scroope, Esq., of Buckinghamshire, through whose intercession with the parliament Waller was permitted to return from his exile; but who was himself hanged at the restoration, for signing the death-warrant of Charles I. A second sister was married to Tomkins, who was hanged for his participation in Waller's plot; and a third to Price, an active parliamentarian.

been employed, must have been faithless to his trust in any case, and the men in power could not have been aware of his disposition to play the spy unless he had already given some proof of his treachery. It is more likely that both stories are true, and that information was conveyed to Pym from both quarters. When plots of this extensive kind are betrayed, intelligence generally comes from more sources than one.

The manner in which the discovery was made known, and which was doubtless premeditated for effect, filled the town with consternation. Pym and others were at St. Margaret's church (May 31. 1643) solemnising a fast, when a messenger came in hurriedly and delivered a letter to Pym, who, after conferring in whispers with his friends, suddenly went out, leaving the congregation in a state of extreme agitation. Waller and Tomkins were apprehended that night at their houses; orders were issued for the apprehension of others, and a committee appointed to examine such persons as they thought fit to bring before them.

The conduct of Waller and Tomkins, upon their seizure, showed how unfit they were to have taken a leading part in a business of such danger and importance. They were both struck to the heart with fear. Instead of observing the secrecy to which they had pledged their confederates, they avowed themselves at once willing to tell all they knew, and perhaps more, if they could purchase their lives by such an ignominy. Tomkins, who had received the commission of array from lady Aubigny, and buried it for security in his garden, avowed the entire affair (which otherwise might never have been traced), and thus the parliament obtained not only a clue to the entire conspiracy, of which they had as yet received only imperfect hints, but the original copy of the king's warrant for raising the city. Waller's avowals were equally pusillanimous and disgraceful. "He was so confounded with fear and apprehension," says lord Clarendon, "that he confessed whatever he had said, heard, thought, or seen; all that he knew of him-

self, and all that he suspected of others, without concealing any person of what degree or quality soever, or any discourse that he ever had upon any occasion entertained with them: *what such and such ladies of great honour, to whom, upon the credit of great wit and very good reputation, he had been admitted, had spoke to him in their chambers of the proceedings of the house;* and how they encouraged him to oppose them; what correspondence and intercourse they had with some ministers of state at Oxford, and how they derived all intelligence thither." But, as if it were not enough to give this sort of full confession of every whisper that had in any way reached him, he proceeded further, in the cowardly hope of obtaining grace for himself as an informer against his friends, (which was actually held out to him by Pym and other of the examiners, in consequence of the information he gave them, and which they could not have procured by any means from any one else,) and denounced the earl of Portland and the lord Conway as being concerned in the agitations in the city, and the earl of Northumberland as being favourable to them. These noblemen were thrown into prison upon his accusation; and to give an additional colouring to his statements, he wrote a pitiful letter to lord Portland, entreating him, for his own sake, to acknowledge his share in these transactions, which lord Portland indignantly denied, and appealed to the house of lords to be brought to a speedy trial, that he might demonstrate the falsehood of the charges. They were accordingly confronted before the committee; and Waller, at his own solicitation, had a conference with lord Portland in a separate room, he having stated that, if he were permitted to confer with him, he could satisfy him as to the veracity of his allegations. When the conference was over, lord Portland came down to Flinn, the usher of the house, and said to him,—"Do me the favour to tell my lord Northumberland, that Mr. Waller has extremely pressed me to save my own life and his, by throwing the blame on lord Conway and the earl of Northumberland." Little re-

liance seems to have been placed on Waller's assertions; for these noblemen, after having been restrained for a short time, were finally liberated on bail.

The only instance in which Waller declined to criminate others, or rather in which he attested the innocence of suspected parties, was in reference to Selden, Pierpoint, and Whitelocke. Having been asked, upon one of his examinations, whether they, and others who were named, had any concern in the plot, he replied that they had not; but he stated, at the same time, that he went one evening to Selden's study, where Pierpoint and Whitelocke then were with Selden, intending to put them in possession of all he knew; but that after he had alluded to the subject in general terms, these gentlemen inveighed with so much warmth against such treachery and baseness, and against any course that might be the cause of shedding so much blood, that he did not dare to divulge his thoughts farther, and was almost disheartened to proceed in the business himself.* Such was the depth of Waller's humiliation, that he was not ashamed to confess, that, being thus rebuked by the integrity of Selden and his friends, he yet had not courage enough to retrace his steps, while he might have done so without perilling the lives of others or his own honour.

The issue of these affairs was tragical to most of the persons involved in them. Waller, Tomkins (his brother-in-law), Chaloner, (the intimate of both, and the confidential agent of Crispe,) Hassel, (the king's messenger, who conveyed the letters between Oxford and London,) Alexander Hampden (a cousin of Waller's), White, and Blinkorne, were arraigned before a council of war at Guildhall. "Waller," says Clarendon, "with incredible dissimulation, acted such a remorse of conscience, that his trial was put off, out of Christian compassion, till he might recover his understanding." In the mean while, all the others were condemned. Tomkins and Chaloner were hanged within sight of their

* Whitelock.

own dwellings, the one in Holborn, the other in Cornhill; Hassel died the night before the trial; Blinkorne and White were reprieved, and ultimately saved, through the humane interference of the lord general, the earl of Essex; and Alexander Hampden, who, in tenderness to his name, was not prosecuted with as much rigour as the rest, was preserved from the gallows only to expire in prison.

Waller alone — the chief and head of the conspiracy — escaped. He owed his life, not to his freedom from whatever guilt might attach to the undertaking, but to the exceeding art he employed in neutralising the vengeance of the covenanters, and to the ineffable meanness with which, to secure his own safety, he sacrificed his friend. It was originally intended that he should be tried by court-martial. The offence was regarded as an attempt to raise troops for the king, and make an armed movement in the city, and it was proposed to bring it before a military tribunal. In this exigency, Waller, feigning to be almost distraught, contrived to have his trial postponed until the fury of the prosecutors was abated, and then appearing at the bar of the house of commons, endeavoured, it must be admitted, with great eloquence, to show that he was not amenable to such a summary jurisdiction. "I shall humbly desire you to consider," he said, "the nature of my offence; not that but I should be much ashamed to say any thing in diminution thereof — God knows, 't is horrid enough (for the evil it might have occasioned); but if you look near it, it may perhaps appear to be rather a civil than a martial crime, and so to have title to a tryal at the common law of the land: here may justly be some difference put between me and others in this business. I have had nothing to do with the other army, or any intention to begin the offer of violence to any body." With respect to sir Nicholas Crispe's affair, he laboured to show, perhaps truly, that he was not responsible for it. "In so much as concerns myself," he observed, "and my part in this business (if I were worthy to have

any thing spoken or patiently heard on my behalf), this might truly be said, that I made not this business, but found it. It was in other men's hands long before it was brought to me, and when it came, I extended it not, but restrained it. For the propositions of letting in part of the king's army, or offering violence to the members of this house, I ever disavowed, and utterly rejected them." The skill with which he acted upon the feelings of his audience is described by Clarendon in terms of unbounded admiration. He was a man, says the noble historian, in truth very powerful in language, and who, by what he spake, and in the manner of speaking it, exceedingly captivated the good-will and benevolence of his hearers, which is the highest part of an orator. He flattered the house by the expression of a most abject submission to its will, at the same time taking care to point out that if they should suffer one of their own body to be tried by the soldiers, they might incur future danger and inconvenience, as the soldiers might thereby grow to that power, that they might not only try those they would not be willing should be tried, but for things they should account no crime; and with these subtle representations he mixed up such an appearance of dejection and remorse, that he succeeded in moving the commons to dispense with the form of a military council, thereby, says Clarendon, preserving his dear-bought life; "so that," continues the same authority, "in truth, he does as much owe the keeping his head to that oration as Cataline did the loss of his to those of Tully."

But his oration could not have saved his life, artful as it was, had he not used other means to propitiate his prosecutors. He affected to be suddenly smitten with holiness, and in his confinement required much ghostly comfort, distributing large sums amongst the ministers, who, in turn, became powerful intercessors on his behalf. By dint of bribery and dissimulation, he at last succeeded in procuring a mitigated sentence of perpetual banishment and a fine of 10,000*l.*, which

the parliament much stood in need of at the time. He is said to have expended 30,000*l.* more in private gifts, and to have sold freehold estates to the extent of 1000*l.* per annum, in order to enable him thus to purchase his own life-interest.

"Let us not," says a biographer, "condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy, which the world hath seldom seen, because his character included not the poet, the orator, and the hero." Dr. Johnson quotes this passage, and leaves it to make its own impression; but the flippancy of the biographer smuggles a false sentiment upon us that ought to be exposed. No reasonable person can blame Waller because he was not a poet, an orator, and an hero; but every man of integrity must unreservedly loathe that degrading passage in his life in which he dissembled his principles and betrayed his associates. It was not his want of courage but of honesty, that draws obloquy upon his name in these transactions.

We gladly pass to pleasanter scenes, where, released from the cares and contests of political life, Waller was once more free to indulge the better part of his nature.

He selected France for the place of his exile, and, lingering in the convalescent climate of Normandy, he staid for some time at Rouen, where his daughter Margaret was born, that daughter who was afterwards his favourite and his amanuensis. He finally settled at Paris; but we trace him previously, in the agreeable and circumstantial diary of the gossiping Evelyn, through Italy, where it appears he made a journey, for the most part, if not the whole way, in company with Evelyn and other English gentlemen, who were probably desirous to escape the troubles at home. He and Evelyn left Venice together in March, 1646, concerning which the following note appears in the diary: —

"Having packed up my purchases of books, pictures, treacle, &c. (the making and extraordinary ceremonie whereof I had been curious to observe, for 't is ex-

tremely pompous and worth seeing,) I departed f^m^ Venice accompanied with Mr. Waller (the celebrated poet), now newly gotten out of England, after y^e^ the parliament had extreamly worried him for attempting to put in execution y^e^ commission of aray, and for which the rest of his colleagues were hanged by y^e^ rebells."

It is sufficiently evident that Waller had the reputation of being a firm loyalist amongst the English on the Continent (for in these days there was no communication of intelligence through the newspapers to give accurate information of public events); nor does he seem to have been anxious to undeceive his acquaintances, by letting them into the history of his submission to the parliament. Evelyn clearly believed him to be a stanch cavalier. In one place he says,— "In company then with Mr. Waller, *one captain Wray*, (son of s^r^ Christ^r^ whose father had been in armes against his ma^tie^, *and therefore by no means welcome to us*,) with Mr. Abdy," &c.

Passing through Switzerland, where the poet and his companions nearly lost their lives in an affray with the mountaineers *, they made their way into France, some-

* The circumstance was this :—Captain Wray, who appears to have had a wonderful stock of animal spirits for a puritan, had a water spaniel with him, which followed him out of England, "a huge filthy cur," and this dog scaring a herd of goats on the summit of a height in the Alps, where there was a village and a chapel, hunted them down the rocks into a river formed by the melting of the snow. The next morning, as the travellers were getting on their mules to depart, a young fellow came demanding money for one of the goats, which he said captain Wray's dog had killed. The Englishmen, who, however they might differ at home in their notions of the rights of property, seem to have been all of one mind abroad, were impatient of being kept in the cold, and so setting spurs to their mules they endeavoured to ride away; when a multitude of people (who were waiting for the priest to say mass, it being Sunday morning) surrounded them, beat them from their saddles, and disarming them of their carbines, brought them back, and put a guard upon them until mass was over. Half a score of grim Swiss, who assumed the functions of magistrates, then sat in judgment upon them, condemning them to pay a pistole for the goat, and ten more for attempting to ride away, threatening, in case of refusal, to send them to prison, and hold them over for a day of public justice, "where," says Evelyn, "as they perhaps would have exaggerated the crime, for they pretended we had primed our carbines, and would have shot some of them (*as indeede the captain was about to do*), we might have had our heads cut off." Of course they thought it more prudent to pay the money, although they considered the proceeding highly unjust. The arbitrariness of the English character is happily illustrated in this anecdote.

times on foot, sometimes on mules, and sometimes in rowing boats. Waller was the life of the party, and made songs, which gave a great zest to their pleasures. At length Waller took up his residence in Paris, where he lived in a style of such splendour and hospitality, that his house became the rendezvous of the leading wits of that city. Evelyn was amongst the most frequent of his visiters, and one of the most intimate of his friends. Several of his children were born in Paris, and one of them was baptized by a "popish midwife;" upon which occasion he went to "consult" with the worthy author of the "Sylva;" but how the consultation ended, Evelyn does not inform us. Enjoying the most refined delights of an elegant circle, Waller continued to cultivate poetry with unabated zeal. Amongst the pieces produced during his exile, are some verses to lady Merton, on New Year's Day at the Louvre, in which, with his usual flattery, he prophesies the restoration of Charles II., and the return of the princess Henrietta (who was under lady Merton's charge,) to her native country,—

"Where peace shall reign, and no dispute arise,
But which rules most, his sceptre, or her eyes,"

and an epitaph on colonel Charles Cavendish, who fell on the king's side, in the twenty-third year of his age, at the fatal engagement at Gainsborough. In both these productions Waller displayed his poetical sympa-

The demand, in the first instance, was resented because the gentlemen did not like to be kept in the cold, arguing upon the right of the poor peasant to payment for the loss of his goat, and so they attempted to ride off; and when they were stopped, captain Wray prepared to fire upon them, which, luckily for the travellers, he was prevented from doing by the promptitude of the incensed crowd; and in the end it is considered an injustice to let them off for a small fine We have no note of how Waller carried himself through this adventure; but no doubt if he had opposed the arrogant bearing of his friends, we should have heard of it. Captain Wray was not wholly made up of these fiery qualities; for when he afterwards arrived at Geneva, where, in spite of the *goître*, the women are accounted handsome, he fell so seriously in love with one of the daughters of a monsieur Saladine (tutor to the young earl of Carnarvon), that it was with great difficulty he could be prevailed upon to resume his journey.

thies in favour of the royal family; but he was not very heavily incumbered with a serious attachment to either party. His muse was not more constant in politics than in love.

At Waller's table all the most celebrated men then in Paris were in the habit of meeting. It was the only English table there except that of the lord St. Alban's, the prime minister, and something more, of the exiled queen.* The poet's hospitality — of which there were many of his countrymen who stood in need — lasted as long as his resources. When they were exhausted he had recourse to his wife's jewels, and these were at length reduced to one, which he called the *Rump* jewel. In this extremity he made interest with his friends to obtain permission to return to England — a favour which was procured for him through the intercession of his brother-in-law, colonel Scroope. The country was now quiet, and no more plots were to be apprehended; especially from a man who had shown himself so unfit for the perilous office of a conspirator. A luckier fortune than he anticipated awaited him. He was not only allowed to return and take possession of his estate at Hail Burn, (diminished in value, but still sufficient to yield him a handsome income,) but he was taken at once into familiar confidence by the protector. Whether from policy (to purchase the panegyric of a favourite poet) or from personal esteem, does not appear; but Cromwell, according to the biographer already referred to, completely unmasked himself before Waller, showing how heartily he despised in secret the religious cant he affected in public. And sometimes, when Waller would

* It is always to be lamented when misfortune is not sustained with such purity of conduct as to enable us to sympathise with it. Such were the sufferings of the royal family in Paris, that cardinal Retz states in his Memoirs, that calling one morning on the queen, he found her in her daughter's chamber. "You see," said the queen, "I am come to keep Henrietta company; *the poor child could not rise for want of a fire.*" They had not money to purchase faggots, and no tradesman would trust them! Yet even these deplorable circumstances did not check the queen's vices.

be seated with him, a servant would come in to say that such and such a person was in attendance, upon which Cromwell would rise and meet them at the door; and in the conversation that followed, Waller could overhear Cromwell frequently employing such current phrases of the day, as "The Lord will help," "The Lord will reveal," &c.; and then dismissing them, he would turn to Waller and excuse himself, observing, "Cousin Waller, I must talk to these men after their own fashion." As a balance for this consummate hypocrisy, it ought to be added that Waller found Cromwell well acquainted with the Greek and Roman historians, which frequently formed a subject of discussion between them.

Thus levated to the friendship of the protector, Waller could do no less than write a panegyric upon him. It was the price of restitution; and whatever may be said or thought of his morality, it must be granted that his verses, at least, are faultless. He had just written upon the young princess in Paris, and expressed his ardent wishes for the restoration of the royal family; but he was now in England, under the shelter of the commonwealth, and his views were changed. The panegyric to the Lord Protector was followed by a poem on the Spanish war; in both of which Waller exalted Cromwell above all other heroes and statesmen, ancient and modern, and urged upon the nation, that they were bound, in gratitude for his great services, to confer the title of king upon him. Cromwell was known in private to be ambitious of the regal dignity, notwithstanding that he affected openly to repudiate it; and it is by no means improbable, that these pieces of the slavish but melodious muse were preconcerted with a view to try the temper of the people on the subject. The device, however, failed; for, although a deputation was got up to invite him to accept the crown, his friends of the army, who were known to be averse to it, particularly Fleetwood and Lambert, counselled him, in the eleventh hour, to refuse.

There was much wavering and solicitude in the whole proceeding: the conference was long and anxious; and Cromwell's emotions on the occasion are said to have so entirely overcome him, that he fainted in his carriage on his way home.

The charm of these poems consists in the extraordinary ingenuity exhibited in the treatment of the topics to which they are addressed—topics which required marvellous delicacy in the handling, and which could hardly have been disposed of with more art than Waller employs. He avails himself only of the more prominent and brilliant points in Cromwell's life, evades all the questionable acts by which he and his party had ascended to power and kept it, and, in the language of poetical fiction, converts the accidental victory over the Spaniards at Celes, which Ludlow, Welwood, and others regarded as the most unfortunate event in Cromwell's career, into such a "piece of glory," that he calls upon the people of England to melt down the plate (amounting to above two millions) which was taken on that occasion into a crown for the brows of the protector.

> "Let the rich ore forthwith be melted down,
> And the state fix'd by making him a crown.
> With ermine clad, and purple, let him hold
> A royal sceptre, made of Spanish gold."

This is explicit enough, at all events; and it must be allowed to Waller that in desiring thus to have "the state fixed," he paid back to his benefactor all the homage that the most determined supporter of the new order of things could render. It is true that soon afterwards Waller paid court to the Stuarts, desiring to see "the state fixed" upon them, as he had just before desired to see it fixed in Cromwell; but it is something to his honour, notwithstanding, that he lamented the death of the protector, when he had nothing more to expect from him, in a strain of such feeling, that all his critics have agreed in thinking that in that instance at least he was sincere. His accommodating spirit, how-

ever, did not escape censure. His panegyric on Cromwell, (the most laboured, for its compass, of all his works,) and his lines on his death, were severely satirised in a piece called "The Panegyric and Storm *, two poetical Epistles by Edmond Waller, Vassal to the Usurper, answered by more faithful Subjects to His Majesty King Charles II." This reply to Waller's adulation was printed abroad in quarto in 1659, and circulated zealously amongst the king's party. But it produced no effect. Waller's pliant genius was not to be abashed by exposures; and upon the restoration, he waited upon his majesty at court with a copy of verses on his "happy return," in which he transferred to his majesty's honour all the greatness he had already bestowed exclusively upon Cromwell, and, before his majesty had yet fairly begun to reign, assured him that

"Your pow'r and skill
Make the world's motion wait upon your will."

But it was not possible to make so fine a display upon this occasion as upon the former. His majesty had done nothing out of which the fertile imagination of the poet could weave a very striking eulogy: there was not much merit in submitting to sufferings which he could neither avert nor mitigate, nor much glory in taking possession of a sceptre which there was nobody to contest. Waller had not yet received any obligations from his majesty, upon which his willing gratitude could be called into play, and all he could do, therefore, was to invest the king with imaginary attributes of goodness and magnificence, transcending, in prospect, the reality of all the goodness and magnificence that preceded him. Charles, however, was not slow to discover that the congratulation was inferior to the panegyric, and told Waller so on the spot. The poet is said to have replied, "Sir, we poets never succeed so well in writing

* This refers to a hyperbolical image at the close of the poem on Cromwell's death, in which Waller supposes the ocean to be so agitated by grief, that her sighs swelled the billows into a tumult.

truth as in fiction." It was by such arts as these that Waller contrived to escape the vengeance of the parliament, to secure his property from confiscation, to gain the confidence of the protector, and, surviving the ruins of the time, to become in the court of Charles II. as great a favourite as he had formerly been in the court of his father.

All the authorities concur in describing Waller as one of the most celebrated wits of the day. This was no easy reputation for a man of seventy to sustain in such society as composed the circle of that licentious court. The vivacity of his conversation was unflagging; and while Buckingham and the others indulged freely in wine, he, confining himself to water, was equal to the highest pitch of their festivity. He was the only water-drinker of that roistering company; and Saville used to say that Ned Waller was the only man in England he would allow to sit with him without drinking. Clarendon bears frank testimony to his sprightliness, St. Evremond certifies to his social and poetical renown, and Burnet records some of his bon môts.

Being thus caressed at court, and received with marked graciousness by the king, Waller once more ventured to enter public life. The convention-parliament sat and was dismissed before he resolved upon this step; and it was not until the next parliament, which met in March, 1661, that he became a candidate, when he was returned for Hastings in Sussex, and afterwards, in 1678, for Chipping Wycombe. He subsequently represented Saltash in the first and only parliament of James II., at eighty-four years of age. At this advanced period his powers were unimpaired; and Burnet says, he was the delight of the house, uttering "the liveliest things of any among them."

Throughout the whole of this long parliamentary service, Waller continued to take a part in the proceedings of the house. Some of his speeches are preserved in the State Trials, and many of them are alluded to by Clarendon, who, although he had not much reason to

speak favourably of him, yet allows him to have possessed considerable talents in debate. "He had been nursed in parliaments," says that writer, "where he sat when he was very young; and so, when they were resumed again, (after a long intermission,) he appeared in those assemblies with great advantage, having a graceful way of speaking; and by thinking much upon several arguments (which his temper and complexion, that had much of melancholy, inclined him to,) he seemed often to speak upon the sudden, when the occasion had only ministered the opportunity of saying what he had thoroughly considered, which gave a great lustre to all he said, which yet was rather of delight than weight." Pepys gives an instance of Waller's speaking that may serve as a brief illustration of the previous "thinking" alluded to by Clarendon. It was at a conference between certain members of both houses, which took place in the painted chamber on the 13th May, 1664, upon the bill for conventicles. The points at issue were these: the lords desired to be relieved from having their houses searched by any but the lord-lieutenant of the county; and, upon being found guilty, wished to be tried only by their peers; and to a clause declaring every meeting a conventicle which should be found doing any thing contrary to the liturgy of the church of England, they required to have added, "or practice." The commons replied, that they knew not what might hereafter be called the practice of the church; "and Mr. Waller," says Evelyn, "for their privileges, told them how tender their predecessors had been of the privileges of the lords; but, however, where the peace of the kingdom stands in competition with them, they apprehend their privileges must give place. He told them that he thought, if they should own all to be the privileges of the lords which might be demanded, they should be led like the man (who granted leave to his neighbour to pull off his horse's tail, meaning that he could not do it all at once,) that, hair by hair, had his horse's tail pulled off indeed; so the commons,

by granting one thing after another, might be served by the lords." * Waller's speeches are full of examples of this sort of premeditated point; which cannot be said to belong to a high class of eloquence, although frequently more effective, by suddenly lighting up the ridiculous or false side of a question, than the most elaborate argument. Thus, in allusion to the ascendancy which the duke of York held, against the feelings of the people, he said that "the house of commons had resolved that the duke of York should not reign after the king's death; but that the king, in opposition to them, had resolved that he should reign even in his life." † And in the debate on the impeachment of lord Clarendon, giving vent to a personal resentment against that nobleman ‡, he described his advice to the king in these terms: "The advice given to the king I look upon to be this. To establish a new government: to be governed by janizaries instead of parliaments: to have a divan, &c.: a great minister of state, instead of a vizier bashau: a worse plot than that of the 5th November. There, if the lords and commons had been destroyed, there would have been a succession; but here both had been destroyed for ever." And he wound up this severe misrepresentation by calling upon the house to regard Clarendon's conduct as constructive treason. Keeping in view the prominent share Waller took in the impeachment, Clarendon's estimate of his character, and frequent acknowledgments of his talents, must be allowed to be in some degree magnanimous.

The cause assigned for Waller's bitterness on this memorable occasion, was, that Clarendon, when he was chancellor, refused to set the seal to the grant of the provostship of Eton college, which the king had bestowed on Waller. The grounds of Clarendon's dissent were, that by the statutes of the college, laymen were excluded from that office. It is asserted that instances had previously occurred in contravention of this rule, in the

* Pepys, vol. ii. † Burnet. ‡ Biog. Br

reigns of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I.; but it is certain that after Clarendon's banishment, when the provostship happened again to fall vacant, and Waller again applied for the appointment, the question was argued for three days before the privy council, and decided against Waller, the Act of Uniformity requiring that the provosts should receive institution as for a parsonage in the diocese of the bishop of Lincoln. There is good reason, therefore, for concluding that Clarendon's decision was correct; and that the instances of lay provosts were violations of the law, and not legal precedents.

This office of provost was the only one Waller ever sought at the hands of government. He had "set his heart upon the place;" and lost it, as he lost Sacharissa, but not without making a more manly struggle for success. The quiet, scholastic retreat would have exactly suited his indolent nature. He might have enjoyed such distinctions as the magistracy or a lieutenancy could have conferred upon him; but he declined them because he did not like the troublesome duties they would have entailed. Disappointed of the object of his ambition, he gradually retreated from the stage of public affairs, filling his leisure hours with the study of poetry, which he continued to cultivate to the last.

Shortly after the accession of James II., the poet, now past fourscore, wrote a piece entitled *A Presage of the Ruin of the Turkish Empire,* which he presented to the king on his birthday. His majesty, says his biographer*, treated him with kindness; and one afternoon, desiring lord Sunderland to desire him to wait upon him, he took him into his closet, and pointing to a particular picture, asked him how he liked it: "Sir," replied Waller, "my eyes are dim, and I know not who it is." The king then informed him that it was the princess of Orange, when Waller exclaimed, that she

* Waller's Life, quoted before. As Dr. Johnson derived his materials chiefly from the anonymous author alluded to, all of the personal anecdotes derived from that source are embodied in his life of the poet: but that circumstance does not suggest a sufficient reason for omitting them here.

was like the greatest woman in the world. "Who do you call so?" inquired his majesty. "Queen Elizabeth," was the answer. "I wonder, Mr. Waller," said the king, "you should think so; but I must confess she had a wise council." "And, sir," retorted Waller, "did you ever know a fool choose a wise one?" The same writer gives us another of his pertinent sayings in his old age. The king, hearing that he was about to marry his daughter to Dr. Birch, sent him a message to the effect, that he was surprised he would think of marrying his daughter to a falling church, when Waller tartly answered, "the king does me very great harm, to take notice of my private affairs; but I have lived long enough to observe, that the falling church *has got a trick of rising again.*" It was supposed that Waller was in the secret of the revolution, because he used to say, that "the king would be left while a whale upon the strand;" but any man of discernment whose attention was drawn to the signs of the times, might have made a similar prediction, without deserving much credit for sagacity.

Old age was now fast accumulating upon the poet the common omens of mortality. He purchased a small estate at Coleshill, where he was born, desirous of ending his life on the spot where it began; for, to use his own touching words, he should be glad, he said, *to die like the stag, where he was roused!* This wish, however, was not granted him. His mind had for some time been preparing for the change which was near at hand, and his religious poems may be received as evidence of the tranquil resignation of his spirit, and of the wonderful clearness of judgment he preserved to the end. These poems, however criticism may decide upon their merits in other respects, have at least this prevailing beauty, that they are replete with a sincere piety, exquisitely mellowed into happy forms of expression. The versification exhibits the same care he was always accustomed to bestow upon his lines, and the design of the whole is more lofty and comprehensive than any he

had ever attempted before. The poem entitled *Divine Love* is the most considerable of his productions; and that he should have planned such an undertaking at the close of so long a life, and executed it with so much success, is a remarkable and, perhaps, unparalleled example of the triumph of mind over bodily decline. The verses designed as *the last verses in the book* are singularly pathetic and impressive, and were written when he was almost blind:—

> "When we for age could neither read nor write,
> The subject made us able to endite."

Dr. Johnson appears to think indifferently of the sacred poems; but as his opinion of them is founded upon a theory which all men will adopt or reject agreeably to their own conceptions of the fitness of such themes for poetry, it can influence only those who believe that religious contemplations ought to be confined to prose. As a canon of criticism it is worthless, and is refuted by the Bible.

Waller was at Beaconsfield when the symptoms of the malady which chiefly affected him, a swelling in the legs, increased so rapidly that it was deemed advisable to consult sir Charles Scarborough, the king's physician, then at Windsor. Waller made his last journey to the royal residence on this melancholy errand; and entreating sir Charles, as an old friend, to be plain with him as to the *meaning* of the swelling, sir Charles answered, "Why, sir, your blood will run no longer." The poet received his sentence with composure, repeated some lines from Virgil, and prepared to "put his house in order." Calling his children round him, he received the sacrament from the hands of his son-in-law, Dr. Birch, and was so clear in his memory and consciousness, that he made a profound profession of his faith, and recalled an incident that had occurred some years before at court, when he chided the duke of Buckingham for talking profanely, telling him that he was a great deal older than his grace, and that he had heard more arguments in favour of atheism

than ever his grace had; that he had lived long enough to see that there was nothing in them, and so he hoped his grace would. In this resigned spirit he died on the 21st of October, 1687, at the great age of 82, and was buried with his ancestors in the churchyard of Beaconsfield. Several epitaphs contended the honour of marking his grave; but a Latin inscription, written by Mr. Rymer, historiographer royal, was adopted for his monument.

He left behind him a numerous family, bequeathing his estate to his second son Edmund, the eldest being a person of weak mind. His third son, William, was a merchant in London; his fourth, Dr. Stephen Waller, became an eminent civilian, and was created one of the commissioners for the union of the two kingdoms; and of his fifth, no account has been preserved. Edmund Waller, the heir alike to his fortune and his genius, afterwards represented Agmondesham in parliament; and, declining to connect himself with either the court or the country party, became the head of that floating minority which was called the flying squadron. He accepted the commissions of the peace and the lieutenancy which his father had refused, joined the sect of the Quakers towards the close of his life, and, dying without issue, willed the estate to his namesake and nephew, the eldest son of his brother Stephen. In addition to these sons, there were eight daughters, three of whom were married, and one was a dwarf. The family continued to return members to parliament down to the latter part of the last century.

So much has been written upon the poems of Waller, and they are so familiar to all English readers, that nothing need be added to the occasional observations scattered through these memorials of his life. He will always be remembered as the first refiner, not merely of the diction, but of the rhythm, of English poetry, and will always be read with pleasure for the liquid sweetness of his versification. Pope, whose ear for the music of well-balanced measures was almost infallible, said that Waller, Spenser, and Dryden, were his favourites (in that order) until he was twelve years old, and that

Waller was remarkable for what the Romans called *rotunditas versuum* *, for which he knew no English word. So highly did he estimate the purity of Waller's language, that in planning a dictionary designed to be authoritative for English writers, he selected Waller as one of the examples in the choice of poetical diction. La Fontaine, Bayle, and St. Evremond eulogised his works, and Voltaire compared him to Voiture, to whom he considered him superior. Nearly all his poems are short, and upon temporary occasions; and the best proof of their intrinsic charm is, that their popularity has outlived the interest of their subjects.

Waller attempted to remodel the "Maid's Tragedy" of Beaumont and Fletcher for the stage, and substituted a new act of his own for the last of the original, the representation of which was prohibited by Charles II. But the experiment only betrayed his incapacity for the drama. The tragic scene became a turgid burlesque in his hands. He fell into a similar mistake in translating the first act of Corneille's "Pompey," not only committing some unaccountable verbal errors, but overlaying by false refinements the true spirit of his author. His genius was not strong enough for such undertakings, and was great only when it was employed upon small things. That *illaborata facilitas*, which a former critic assigns as the distinguishing characteristic of Cicero's prose, has been applied by Fenton with propriety to Waller's poetry.

Of his political character enough has been urged in the delineation of his political conduct. If a man can be said to possess any principle, who is utterly destitute of firmness, and ready to purchase his security at any sacrifice, perhaps Dr. Johnson is justified in saying that he was habitually and deliberately a friend to monarchy. But if monarchy had no better friends, it would be in a sorry plight. We must divorce the politician from the poet, if we would pronounce the name of Edmund Waller



* Spence's Anecdotes.

with respect. Happily the strife of parties commits few records to posterity; while poetry, addressed to the universal sympathies of mankind, is indestructible. Let Waller's insincerity, cowardice, and slavish sycophancy perish in his ashes, because they belonged to the grosser part of his being; and let nothing of him survive but his poetry, its divine and spiritual essence.

JOHN MILTON.

(1608—1674.)

There are so many biographies of Milton, that an apology would be necessary for attempting a new one, if his life could be omitted in a work of this kind.* It sometimes happens, however, that when a great number of writers employ themselves upon the same subject, the desire of avoiding the beaten track, carries

* The biographies of Milton extant, exceed in number those of any other English poet. Independently of the lives in Wood's Fasti Oxonienses (the earliest in point of date), in the Biographia Britannica (written by Dr. Nicholls), in Aikin, Chalmers, and the rest of the biographical dictionaries, there are several narratives, either published separately or attached to different editions of his works It will save repeated references to these authorities in the ensuing pages, to enumerate the principal biographies here. The memoir upon which all the rest are chiefly founded, is that which was written by Edward Philips, the poet's nephew, who lived in his house, and was well informed upon all the circumstances he relates: ed. 1694. Toland's Life of Milton, was published in a folio edition of Milton's works, 1698; and afterwards in 8vo. 1699, containing, amongst other curious things, Toland's speculations upon the authorship of "Icon Basilike," which appeared, with his own consent, in Bayle's Dictionary, art. Milton. Life by Fenton, 1727. Peck's Memoir of Milton, containing some new facts, but silly and impertinent in criticism, 1740. Dr. Birch's Life of Milton, 1753, valuable for its research, and for having first drawn to light Milton's MSS. at Cambridge. A life by bishop Newton, 2d edit. 1750. Richardson, the painter, also wrote a Life of Milton, which is not of much value. Dr. Johnson's life was the next; and it was rapidly followed by another by Hayley, designed in an affectionate spirit to neutralise the asperity of Johnson; which was succeeded by a Memoir by Dr. Simmonds, an intemperate and extravagant production; and another by Todd, to whose indefatigable researches we are indebted for many minute facts that had previously escaped. The Rev John Mitford subsequently published a new Life of Milton, in the Aldine edition of the Poets, chiefly remarkable for its accuracy and quiet spirit of investigation; another life (with a strong political bias) appeared by William Carpenter; and the last was by sir Egerton Brydes, attached to an edition of the poems, in six volumes, 1835; a memoir irregular and discursive, but not wanting in good feeling and good taste. In addition to all these lives (the dates of which are not given throughout in the above list in the original editions), are various incidental notices, which may be traced, through the Reliquiæ Wottonianæ, Warton's notes on the juvenile poems, Bentley's annotations, and a multitude of miscellaneous publications which, contributing singly but little, yet constitute on the whole a greater quantity of suggestions than, perhaps, can be discovered in our literature in reference to any other writer except Shakspeare.

them into unexplored recesses, where something new, either in fact or speculation, is almost sure to be found; and he who comes last, has at least the advantage of being able to combine into one view whatever is original in each. It may also be remarked, that the public seldom read all such biographies; and, selecting one for some peculiar qualities of excellence, suffer the rest, whatever their merits may be, gradually to fall into oblivion. This is especially the case with the life of Milton which has been monopolised in the favourite pages of Dr. Johnson. But the preference thus conceded to the style of the biographer, is manifestly injurious to the fame of the poet; for, of all similar compositions in our language, Johnson's biography of Milton is the most bigotted, ungenerous, and untrue. "He admits him into his 'Lives of the Poets,'" says a distinguished writer, "with a reluctant and churlish welcome!" * A similar observation will apply to Milton's critics, who are still more numerous than his biographers. Addison and Johnson (who did little more than embody Addison's criticism in his own more magnificent diction) are alone popularly referred to as expositors of Milton's poetry, as if such men as Hazlitt and Channing had never written. It may be asserted, therefore, that there exist abundant materials for constructing a new narrative, which shall present some features of interest, not collected into any former biography. But, apart from all these considerations, the subject itself is inexhaustible.

The family of John Milton has been traced back only to his grandfather, who was keeper of the forest of Shotover, and a zealous papist, and who disinherited his son for embracing the reformed faith. Of his earlier progenitors nothing more is on record than that they held estates at Milton in Oxfordshire, which they

* Hazlitt — Lectures on the English Poets, 1818. Cowper is said to have been so offended with Johnson's Life of Milton, that after reading the half of it, and noting his objections in the margin, he threw away the book.

lost in the wars of the Roses. His father, who had been educated at Oxford, being thrown upon his own resources, adopted the laborious profession of a scrivener, married a lady of good family *, and took a house in Bread-street, London †, where the poet was born on the 9th of December, 1608. Of this marriage there was issue also, Christopher, who, studying the law, rose to knighthood, and was made a baron of the Exchequer, under king James; and Anne, who was married to Mr. Philips, secondary in the crown office, and who was the mother of the poet of that name.

The education of John Milton was conducted with great care. A private tutor was provided for him at home, under whom he made so rapid a progress, that he was placed at an early age in St. Paul's school. His application at this period was intense. The course of his studies embraced the usual classical authors, philosophy, mathematics, and poetry; in all of which his proficiency was considered so remarkable, that one of his commentators declares, he "was a man in his childhood." ‡ His principal delight was poetry, especially the "smooth elegiac poets," whom, from reading, he soon came to imitate. § His studious habits at this tender age, not only impaired his health then, but laid the seeds of that malady which ultimately darkened the close of his life. He tells us — (it is one of the charms of Milton's writings, that they reveal to us incidentally numerous traits of himself, his character, and his life) — that he rarely went to bed before mid-

* According to Philips, the lady belonged to a Welsh family, and her name was Caston, which on account of the nearness of Philips' relationship to her, has been universally adopted But it is necessary to observe, that Wood (who had also good opportunities of obtaining information) says that she was descended from the Bradshaws of Lancashire, and that Peck says that she was a Haughton of Haughton Tower in Lancashire. The fact is unimportant: her greatest honour was not her own birth, but her son's.

† Milton's father put up in front of his house the sign of a spread eagle blazoned, argent, with two heads guled, legged and beaked sable. The only interest attached to this circumstance is, that such were the arms with which John Milton used to seal his letters. His small silver seal, we are informed by the Rev. Mr. Mitford, was in the possession of the late Dr. Disney.

‡ Morhoft.

§ See Milton's prose works — Apology for Smectymnus.

night, which, added to frequent head-aches, was the "first ruin" of his eyes, that were weak from childhood. His devotion to literature began with the very dawn of his faculties.

Fortunate in the choice of his tutors, he profited largely by their zeal, commemorating his attachment to them in some of his earliest poems, which were written in Latin. At seventeen he was admitted a pensioner of Christ's college, Cambridge, under Mr. William Chappel, and distinguished himself above all his contemporaries by the excellence of his exercises, which discovered not only a rich imagination, but an extent of learning which at his age could not fail to have surprised his teachers. He was so well skilled in Latin, that even at fifteen years of age he had already transcended, in the purity of his compositions, all former attempts of Englishmen to write in that language. Although Latin was sedulously cultivated in the reign of Elizabeth, there were no instances of successful versification. The utmost that had been accomplished, was to write clear and flowing prose, and in that Roger Ascham excelled. Dr. Johnson, who grudges Milton every concession extorted by his genius, and who, to reduce the marvel of his "vernal fertility," as he calls it, reminds the reader that Milton uses the date of fifteen till he is sixteen, as if he ought to have subscribed fifteen and so many months to his juvenile poems, acknowledges that there was nothing worthy of notice in the way of Latin poetry before the elegies of Milton, except, *perhaps*, Alabaster's "Roxana;" and observes, that whenever Haddon or Ascham attempted verse, they only provoked derision. This evidence may safely be relied upon, for it is that of a very unwilling witness.

It appears, that for some reason, which has not transpired, Milton was rusticated from college. The fact itself is alluded to in some verses he addressed to his friend Charles Deodate; and is confirmed by a calumnious insinuation, which was afterwards cast upon him, that he spent his youth in licentiousness; which licentiousness

was assumed from the circumstance of his banishment. The frequent references Milton makes to the defects of university education (which had previously occupied the thoughts of Cowley), indicate the strength of his objections to the whole course pursued in the colleges; and probably out of these objections arose the causes which led to his temporary retirement. He disliked the formalities of that sort of academical discipline which checks the spirit without improving the mind; and having a natural repugnance to restraint, he resisted it. The issue of this struggle was the infliction of corporal punishment, an indignity which may be supposed to have roused his nature into open rebellion, and to have produced that sentence which, being unconnected with any moral delinquencies, cannot be considered a degradation.* It is quite certain, however, that he returned

* The cause of Milton's rustication has been variously speculated upon by different writers. One thinks it might have originated in "some private challenge;" because Milton, in his *Defensio secunda*, says that he understood the use of a sword, (which he afterwards, by the way, turned to account in his academy, which included the "instruction of youth in all arts and exercises, civil and military,") and that he knew how to resent an affront from men of the most athletic constitution. Another assigns it to intemperate habits, which Milton expressly denies, and which, of all men, was least likely to be true of him. The most probable cause, and that upon which the majority of his biographers are agreed, was that haughty consciousness of great powers which rendered him impatient of control. But the corporal punishment inflicted upon this proud student, although it cannot be said to be involved in greater obscurity, has given occasion to a greater controversy. Dr Johnson, without having any authority for it, extracts from his lines to Deodate a strong suspicion that Milton suffered this indignity. Throughout all subsequent biographies this suspicion has been distilled with more or less effervescence of zeal, one way or the other. Some biographers reject it altogether; and sir Egerton Brydges, with an enthusiasm which is creditable to his taste, though not to his research, says that "it is absurd to construe it (the allusion in the verses) to have been corporal punishment." Yet, however reluctant we may be to believe the story, there can hardly exist any reasonable doubt of its truth. Johnson, it appears, by the mere instinct of his ill-will to Milton, struck upon an unpleasant fact, which he confessedly could not sustain by any recorded proofs. Of the fact itself we have sufficient evidence in Warton's "Life and Remains of Dean Bathurst," published in the year 1761. Amongst other interesting particulars related in that work, Warton informs us, that in the Ashmolean Museum there is one of Aubrey's MSS., which is very curious and valuable, and little known, containing an account of celebrated English writers, especially the poets, with many of whom Aubrey was intimately acquainted. This MS. was lent to Wood, when he was writing the Athenæ, which is attested by a note from Wood to Aubrey, inserted in a blank leaf. The whole of Wood's memoir of Milton in the Athenæ (the first that appeared in print) was derived from this MS., and Aubrey left a memorandum complaining of the way in which Wood dealt with the MS, while it was in his possession. Warton inspected it, and compared it

to the university, that in 1628 he became a bachelor of arts, and took out the degree of master of arts in 1632. Dr. Johnson says that there "is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness," and that "he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors, or his own captious perverseness." Upon what testimony these statements rest, we are not informed; but we have Milton's own authority that they are false. In the *Apology for Smectymnus* he acknowledges with a grateful mind the more than ordinary favour and respect which he found above any of his equals from those courteous and learned men, the fellows of that college wherein he spent some years, "who," he observes, "at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many ways, how much better it would content them that I would stay, as by many letters full of kindness and loving respect, both before that time and long after, I was assured of their singular good affection towards me.*" If Milton's veracity must be questioned as to the feelings of others, I know not by what right it can be challenged as to his own.

It was the desire of Milton's father that his son should take holy orders; and Milton himself was at first in

with the life by Wood, and found that the latter had omitted several circumstances, one of which he instances, *that Milton was actually whipped by Dr. Thomas Bainbridge, master of Christ's college, while he was at Cambridge.* This leaves the meaning of the disputed lines no longer open to speculation.

Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,
Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.

The publication of Warton's Life of Dean Bathurst is referred in the Biog. Brit., in a note to Toland's life, where these circumstances are detailed. Warton's pamphlet appeared in 1631, at the time the last volumes of the Biog. Brit. (published in 1633) were preparing for the press, which will perhaps explain why the fact was not embodied in the Life of Milton in that work, the volume containing it having probably been already printed. Milton, there is reason to believe, was one of the last students in our universities who suffered the humiliating punishment.

* Johnson extracts a part of this passage, and, with incredible malignity, mutilates it by omission.

favour of that profession; but as his mind expanded, and he enlarged the vast circle of his acquisitions, he abandoned the intention, resolving not to limit his future life to any of the professions. His motives for this resolution were twofold; he objected to the restraint which the church would have put upon his cultivation of poetry, towards which his soul yearned from the beginning; and he thought it better to prefer a "blameless silence," to the "sacred office of speaking" under obligations that might have pressed upon his conscience. His fitness for the ministry, so far as the study of divinity was concerned, is sufficiently evinced even in his earliest poems, his translations from the Psalms, his beautiful *Hymn on the Nativity* (which Johnson passes over in stately silence), and others; but he was too deeply impressed with the responsibility of the office to undertake it until he had thoroughly examined his own inclinations, and been wholly prepared to subscribe, not only to the articles, but to the forms of the church. His father was at first displeased with this temper of virtuous reluctance; but ultimately consenting to his son's views, was repaid for his indulgence by a Latin poem (which has been exquisitely translated by Cowper), in which he excuses himself for his love of poetry by reminding his father of his own passion for music, the associate art. Cowper has rendered this with such eloquent simplicity, that the passage alluded to may be accepted almost as a part of Milton's autobiography.

"Nor then persist, I pray thee, still to slight
The sacred nine, and to imagine vain
And useless powers, by whom inspired, thyself
Art skilful to associate verse with airs
Harmonious, and to give the human voice
A thousand undulations, heir by right
Indisputable of Arion's fame.
Now say, what wonder is it, if a son
Of thine delight in verse; if so conjoined
In close affinity, we sympathise
In social arts, and kindred studies sweet?

Such distribution of himself to us
Was Phœbus' choice; thou hast thy gift, and I
Mine also; and between us we receive,
Father and son, the whole inspiring God."

The musical talents of his father must have been of a high order, for he was not only a performer, but excelled in composition; some of his pieces being yet to be found in the musical libraries. The entertainments to which Milton was accustomed at his father's house, and his own early love of theatricals, are cited as evidences against his adoption of the strict and austere principles of the puritans in his youth: but there is no ground for supposing, that if he had not then wholly embraced the habits of the puritans, he had committed himself to any other religious sect or party. His love of the theatre was only a form of his love of poetry, and his opportunities of enjoying it were scanty. Nor does it appear that he entered into the musical recreations of his father's circle: on the contrary, after leaving college, and returning to the villa* at Horton, near Colnbrook, on the borders of Buckinghamshire and Middlesex (to which place his father had retired upon a competency), he devoted his whole time to a course of unremitting study in the Greek and Latin authors. His first tutor, Young, was a puritan, and may be presumed to have made some impression upon the mind of his pupil; and as we find him at college urging objections to the discipline of a university, and even to church government, it must be concluded that his opinions were gradually taking that direction from his boyhood, which the civil war ultimately confirmed.

A residence of five years in his father's house prepared him for the great labours of his life, by enabling him to complete his investigations in history, philosophy, and poetry, and to nurture his genius in a grateful scholastic retirement. It was in this interval that he pro-

* The house was taken down nearly twenty years ago.—*Symmonds.*

duced the "Comus," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Lycidas." If we may refer to Ovid the models of his Latin epistles, we shall not so easily discover in antiquity the prototypes of these magnificent poems. Perhaps, the most satisfactory test of the originality of "Comus," is to be found in the contradictory speculations of recondite criticism. Dr. Johnson derives it from the "Circe" of Homer; another annotator suspects that it was taken from the "Comus" of Erycius Puteanus; a third asserts that the plan was evidently borrowed from George Peele's "Old Wives' Tale;" Thyer detects the moral in the "Table of Cebes;" and Warton, whose discriminating notices must not, therefore, be rejected, discovers likenesses to Fletcher and Shakspeare, and traces the superstitions of the forest to some descriptions of the desert of Lop in the voyages of Marco Polo. These conjectures cannot all be correct; and it would be difficult to read "Comus" with attention (if it were possible to read it heedlessly), and not arrive at the conclusion that they are all wrong. Perhaps, there never was a poem in which the identity of a single and peculiar mind — stored with classical lore, and strengthened by profound meditation in the solitudes of nature — was more obvious. Other poets might have written "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," although no poet has written any thing approaching to them — but, while Spenser might have supplied some parts, and Shakspeare more, it is doubtful if any one but Milton could have written the whole of "Comus." It is not merely the production of such profuse miracles of beauty as are crowded into the mazes of this marvellous work, but that greater miracle than all, — their perfect and harmonious combination, — that constitutes its surpassing excellence. It exhibits the airy and voluptuous images of a vision blended into a lyrical drama of human interest. In consummate and sustained versification, in exuberance of imagination, in pure sentiment, picturesque truth, and felicitous diction, "Comus" must be regarded as the germ of "Paradise Lost." Yet neither this poem, nor "L'Allegro,"

nor "Il Penseroso," nor any of Milton's minor pieces were popular amongst his contemporaries. They were little read in his own lifetime; and, indeed, so little known afterwards, that Pope imitated them freely without acknowledgment, in the belief that they were buried in that lumber of the old poets which the multitude at large rarely troubled themselves to inquire about. "Comus," which was printed in the first instance without the author's name, was published in a volume with the other short poems in 1645, and did not reach a second edition for nearly thirty years afterwards, when the "Paradise Lost" began to draw curiosity upon the author. Cowley and the other metaphysical poets engrossed the public so completely, that Milton failed to make any suitable impression upon a taste so artificial and obstinate. He was of so little note as a poet, until the appearance of his great epic, which was printing when Cowley was on his deathbed, that Evelyn, who mixed largely with society, and was in the midst of the circles most likely to echo the reputation of every distinguished writer, mentions him but once in his Diary, and then only in a contemptuous passing allusion to "*that* Milton, who wrote for the regicides!"*

The masque of "Comus" was written by Milton at the request of Lawes, the composer, who taught music in the family of the earl of Bridgewater, under whom Milton's father held his house at Horton. There was excitement and temptation enough in the subject, and in the associations of the Bridgewater family, to inspire the poet. Dryden informs us, and Pope confirms the tradition, that Milton was an imitator (they confound enthusiasm with imitation, and must have meant that he was a passionate lover) of Spenser in his youth;

* Milton was scarcely known when Cowley was at the height of his reputation: nor, indeed, for some time after. Lord Clarendon, we have already seen, declared that Cowley had in his day "taken a flight above all men in poetry;" and Dennis, in his Familiar Letters, says, "Never any poet left a greater reputation behind him than Mr. Cowley, while Milton remained obscure, and known but to a few; but your grace knows very well that the great reputation of Cowley did not continue half a century, and that Milton's is now on the pinnacle of the temple of Fame."

and it may, therefore, be taken for granted that his delight in the composition of this masque for Ludlow castle was in no slight degree enhanced by the fact that the countess of Derby, the mother-in-law of the earl of Bridgewater, was Alice Spenser, the relative and patroness of the author of the "Faërie Queen." The circumstance upon which "Comus" is founded, was an incident that occurred to the lady Alice Egerton, the earl's daughter, in passing through Haywood forest, where she was benighted; an incident which has been so frequently repeated, that it is familiar to every body. "Comus" was acted at Ludlow castle by the lady Alice Egerton (the heroine of the fact as well as the masque), the lord Brackley, and Mr. Thomas Egerton, who also lost their way in the forest upon the same occasion. The patronage of this noble family was the first recognition that was taken of Milton's genius. But it did not last long. The feuds of the royalists and the puritans broke up their friendship, and he derived no farther advantages from the house of Bridgewater.*

"L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are, perhaps, to the world at large, the most familiar of Milton's poems. It may be said of them, that they produce increased pleasure at every fresh perusal; that we can always discover new reasons for liking them, even after we think we have exhausted them; and that they impress themselves unawares upon the memory, so vivid and choice are the images and the diction. They are exquisite specimens of that "doric delicacy" which sir Henry Wotton ascribes to the songs and odes of "Comus." It is suggested by Warton, that Milton owed some obligation to Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," in the treatment of the subjects; a conjecture which will be found to be highly

* The Egertons were, by marriage, coheirs of the blood of the royal races of Tudor and Plantagenet; and in later times the name of Bridgewater has been distinguished by other memorable circumstances — the canals and the treatises. The lady Alice Egerton — the lady in Comus — was married to the earl of Carbury, who protected Jeremy Taylor at his house in Carmarthenshire during the troubles. Jeremy Taylor has exquisitely pourtrayed her character in a sermon on her death. Her sister lady Mary, was married to the celebrated lord Herbert of Cherbury.

probable, by a reference to that quaint and learned book. Peck, who betrays some very fantastical notions about poetry in his life of Milton, calls these pieces by the strange titles of "Homo L'Allegro, or the lætans," and "Homo Il Penseroso, or the cogitans." In the same vagrant way he speaks about "Lycidas," an elegy on the death of Mr. King, a young college friend of Milton's, who was drowned on his passage from Chester to Ireland. The irregularity of the rhymes in "Lycidas" he discovers to be an intentional, but secret, attempt to exhibit a canon of music. This very odd supposition is explained by drawing a bowline from rhyme to rhyme; the rhymes constituting the chords in the bar. This sort of criticism could be pardonable only in a writer who favours us with stage directions for "Paradise Lost," and who infers from the following lines—

"As in an organ, from one blast of wind.
To many a row of pipes the sound board breathes,"—

that Milton could take an organ to pieces, clean it, and put it together again with his own hands!*

The countess of Derby, who was an excellent judge of poetry, the Amaryllis of Spenser's "Colin Clout's come home again," and celebrated also in an epigram of Harrington's on her marriage to the Lord Chancellor, extended her favours to Milton on this auspicious occasion, and the "Arcades" was the result. This lyrical fragment appears to have been written at her desire; and was probably composed at her house at Harefield, where it formed part of a dramatic entertainment acted by the members of her family, and where Milton used sometimes steal from his studies to hear her talk of Spenser. Milton's part in this entertainment is slight, and is literally confined to three

* There is no doubt that Milton could play on the organ; although it is not quite so certain that he could take it to pieces. Bishop Newton observes, that "Milton frequently fetches his images from music, more than any other English poets; as he was very fond of it, and was himself a performer upon the organ and other instruments." His capacious mind appears to have embraced all arts and sciences.

songs. Warton conjectures that the rest of the entertainment was made up of prose and machinery, and probably he is right. Whatever it was—dances, scenery, or dialogue, the passages contributed by Milton are the only reliques of it that remain.

During his residence at Horton, Milton maintained an affectionate and earnest correspondence with his friend and schoolfellow, Charles Deodate; constantly communicating to him the nature and progress of his studies—giving him outlines of his meditated works—and, with the implicit confidence of a pure and elevated regard, making him the repositary of all his thoughts, hopes, moods, and anxieties. The tone of Milton's mind, and the progressive formation of his character into that shape of Roman sternness which it finally took, are beautifully delineated in his letters. They develop the entire history of his intellect; and we discern in their revelations the springs of his principles, his philosophy, and his actions.

The difference between wilful and capricious opposition to authority, and a just discrimination of the proper duties of obedience, is shown in the whole of Milton's conduct at this period. It has been said by a writer, the recapitulation of whose offences against the dignity of Milton's character would weary the patience of the most indifferent readers, that "the thoughts of obedience, canonical or civil, raised his indignation." The tendency of the assertion is to reduce the weight and authority of Milton's recusancy in reference to church affairs, by insinuating that he could not submit to control of any kind. Yet we find this stubborn and ill-conditioned spirit full of grateful love and unquestioning reverence where nature and reason required his submission. A controversialist in the university, at home he was remarkable for the zealous discharge of his filial obligations. To his mother he exhibited a heart fraught with tenderness; treated her with undeviating regard; extolled her charitable disposition; and, although he had long contemplated a journey of im-

provement abroad, postponed it from time to time in deference to her wishes, and never carried it into effect until her death enabled him to gratify his own desires without violating hers. The terms he maintained with his father were those that must always subsist where there is a true sense of relative and mutual attachment. The playful freedom of his remonstrance about the practice of poetry will show how little shallow austerity there was on one side, and how much real respect on the other. Towards his tutors he expressed the warmest feelings of kindness and esteem ; and in all his friendships he displayed a strong sensibility that inspired his correspondence with an affecting tone of trustful deference. Such a man ought surely to be elevated above the reach of a quibble, and the superiority of his character ought to be a sufficient guarantee that the mean drawbacks of querulous temper or restless vanity (the curse of incapacity) could not have detracted from his greatness.

Upon the death of his mother, Milton obtained permission from his father to prosecute a journey into Italy, which he had long meditated ;— a country with whose poetical treasures his mind was filled, and whose classic soil his imagination had so often visited in his solitary studies.* Previously to his departure, he procured some excellent hints from sir Henry Wotton, provost of Eton college, and formerly ambassador from the English court at Venice. Amongst the useful rules for his conduct laid down by sir Henry, was the advice which he had himself received from an old Roman courtier at Sienna, when he was on his way to Rome.

* He appears about this time, before the death of his mother, to have proposed a residence in town ; for his spirit, now matured for the active business of life, was beginning to grow weary of the seclusion of the country. We find him writing to his steady friend Deodate an account of his intention of taking "chambers in one of the inns of court, where," he adds, " I may have the benefit of a pleasant and shady walk ; and where with a few associates I may enjoy more comfort, when I choose to stay at home, and have a more elegant society when I choose to go abroad : in my present situation you know in what obscurity I am buried, and to what inconveniencies I am exposed." It has been suspected, and not without reason (see his seventh Elegy), that there were other attractions in the walks besides the shade and coolness.

"I had won his confidence," says sir Henry, "enough to beg his advice, how I might carry myself securely there, without offence of others, or of mine own conscience. *Signior Arrigo meo,* says he, *I pensieri stretti, et il viso sciolto.* That is, your thoughts close, and your countenance loose, will go safely over the whole world." This recalls the letter of true Italian instructions given by Petrarch to a messenger he dispatched to the pope, and is more to be applauded for its cunning than its candour. If Milton did not very strictly conform to the prudent policy of sir Henry, he reaped considerable advantages from the favourable terms in which he recommended him to the protection of his continental friends.

He embarked for France in the spring of 1638, and went first to Paris, where Hugo Grotius happened then to be residing in the capacity of ambassador from the queen of Sweden. The reputation of that distinguished man was a sufficient ground for Milton to desire his acquaintance; and applying to lord Scudamore, the English ambassador, he was gratified with an introduction. Connected with this circumstance we have a very curious and interesting tradition of the original project of the "Paradise Lost." Grotius had many years before written, amongst other Latin poems, a tragedy upon the plan of Adam's fall, and Milton had meditated a tragedy upon the same subject. It does not appear whether he had seen the tragedy of Grotius before he formed his own design; but it is clear that he had matured his plan so far as to adjust the whole action into the requisite divisions, to supply an outline of the argument throughout, and to complete a very numerous table of *dramatis personæ.* This tragedy, judging by the skeleton, which has been preserved in MS. in the library of Trinity college, Cambridge*, and copied into most of the

* Other MSS of Milton's are also to be found in this library, and that of Comus amongst the rest. The variations between the printed copy and the original, together with specimens of the skeleton projects of Milton, are given by Birch and others. But the variations exhibited by Birch have been shown by Warton to be incorrect.

biographies of Milton, was apparently to be constructed partly upon the model of the Greek tragedy, and partly after the manner of the old allegorical mysteries. This was the first draught of that design which, subsequently deepening its channels in his mind, expanded into an epic. It is not improbable that he was specially influenced in his desire to converse with Grotius, by the coincidence which had thus, perhaps involuntarily, drawn them to the same subject; and that the existence of the tragedy by the latter led him to abandon an intention, which the world has reason to be grateful he did not carry into execution. According to the sketches, or rough outlines of the original idea, Milton seems to have been in some incertitude as to the title. In one MS. he calls it "Adam Unparadised;" in another, "Adam in Banishment;" and in a third, "Paradise Lost."

From Paris, Milton proceeded direct to Nice, where he embarked for Genoa, and passed from thence through Leghorn and Pisa to Florence. He kept no diary of his movements; but we need not track him in his course, which was a progress of ovations. Wherever he went, he was received with hospitality and treated with distinction by persons of the first consideration in rank and literature. "He who had been little noticed in his own country," says sir Egerton Brydges, "was received with the most distinguished honours abroad, in the country of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso."

Sir Egerton Brydges, like most of the writers upon Milton, is occasionally chargeable with excesses, swelling out of an enthusiasm, which is generally so pure and generous, that it is perhaps ungracious to say that it sometimes compromises his judgment. In conducting the author of "Paradise Lost" through the birthplaces of the Italian poets, he cannot help expressing his conviction that Milton "could not have enjoyed Italian manners and Italian genius," had his mind at this epoch been so strongly infected with puritanism as his

enemies averred. I will not stop to suggest that his puritanism did not of necessity disqualify him from enjoying the manners or genius of any country, but allow sir Egerton to proceed. "There he saw all the pomp and warmth of religion; puritanism had all its acidity and rigidness, and all its freezing baseness. Coming fresh from these things, of which he has expressed his delight, I know not how he could so at once plunge into principles, which would destroy them all to the very root; but such are the inconsistencies of frail humanity! Gray saw all these things [*i. e.* the pomp and warmth of religion] with equal sensibility and taste, if not with equal genius; and he remained fixed in the love of them for life. But it is worthy of remark that as soon as Milton actively took the side of this cause of destruction, the Muses left him for twenty years. Coming fresh from the living fountains of all imaginative creation, the happy delirium of glorious genius subsided into a cold and harsh stagnation of all that was eloquent and generous. The blight was more violent and effective in proportion as the bloom had been strong." A stranger to our literature would be startled upon learning for the first time that it was after all this terrible desolation had done its work upon Milton, after this "cold and harsh stagnation," and this "violent and effective blight," that the poet wrote the "Paradise Lost," and "Paradise Regained." Sir Egerton Brydges seems to have forgotten that circumstance altogether. The speculations upon the frostwork of puritanism, too, are all one-sided, and equally deficient in comprehensiveness and truth. It is quite evident, that whatever effect puritanism might have produced upon other minds, it did not chill the current of Milton's imagination, which ran more brightly and freshly, and with a bolder tide, after he had become a confirmed puritan, and taken an active part in the struggle, than ever it did before. The error lies in confounding the principles of liberty, for which the battle was fought, with the dark fanaticism of the multitude. The puri-

tanism was an accident—civil and religious liberty were the essentials. Cromwell scorned in private the cant he employed to promote his objects in public; and Milton, who gave the voice of a trumpet to the contest, preserved to the end that proud freedom from degrading bigotry, which it is the province of an intellect like his to maintain through all the fluctuations and distortions of sects and parties.*

At Florence he spent two months, receiving the most flattering attentions from the academicians and the nobility, and giving, in the learned institutions, proofs of his genius and acquirements. Poetical tributes poured in upon him: Vati addressed him in a Latin inscription, Francini in an Italian ode, and Malatesti dedicated him the MS. entitled "La Tina." Milton repaid these courtesies in sonnets and some still more elaborate poems. From Florence he passed to Sienna, and thence to Rome, lingering for two months in the immortal city. It has been remarked of some of Milton's magnificent descriptions of the scenery of Greece, which possess all the charms of lofty eloquence with the close truth of individual observation, that he delineated Greece, especially the view of Athens from Mount Hymettus †, with the accuracy of an eye-witness, al-

* In another part of his examination of Milton's poetry, where the consideration of the visit to Italy is not immediately before him, sir Egerton Brydges appears to admit all that is urged above. "All his excitements were intellectual; his thoughts were compound; but it is surprising how a mind habituated for twenty years to the coarse routine of public business, could at once throw it all off, and produce a poetical texture so close-wrought, and of such unmingled majesty. Plain as the style is, it never sinks into colloquiality or the language of business; *he had kept his genius aloof from his daily occupation, and suffered not the world to blow or breathe upon it.*"—*Life*, vol i p. 207 It is not necessary to say that I do not extract this for the sake of the criticism, which is perhaps neither very clear nor very true, but for its recantation of the "blight."

† "Look once more, ere we leave this specular mount,
Westward, much nearer by south-west behold;
Where on the Ægæan shore a city stands,
Built nobly; pure the air, and light the soil;
ATHENS, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits,
Or hospitable, in her sweet repose,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades.
See there the olive grove of Academe,
Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long;

though he had never seen the places. The precision would be surprising, if it were the precision of one who took literally the ground-plan of the scene; but Milton's precision is that of a painter, who presents a *coup d'œil* in such a masterly spirit, that, while it appears to take in every fraction of every object within sight, (which, if it did, would in reality diminish the resemblance,) it gives only those prominent features which, grouped with artistical power, bring out into full and truthful effect the whole of the living landscape. But it was in Italy he drank in this inspiration for the beautiful and grand in nature and art — in Rome, Florence, Genoa, and Naples. The sense of such exquisite sights is imperfect in those who dwell in islands like England, where clouded skies and the eternal spray of the turbid waters darken and limit our perceptions, and give a tone of rude monotony to our notions of the picturesque. We want the scale of grandeur and its endless varieties that we find in the Alps and the Apennines, in the Archipelago, and the remoter East; and in the lack of such resources, we send our painters to Italy to study under more brilliant skies, where luxuriant nature as

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There flowery hill HYMETTUS, with the sound
Of bee's industrious murmur, oft invites
To studious musing; there Illissus rolls
His whispering stream: within the walls then view
The schools of ancient sages; his who bred
Great Alexander to subdue the world,
Lyceum there, and painted STOA next."

This description of the scene, looking from the summit of Hymettus, is nearly as close as the prose outlines of Dr. Wordsworth, in his recent account of Greece.

"From the eminence of Hymettus, the traveller will obtain the noblest views of the immortal city itself. Thence he will behold it placed on the central rock of its Acropolis, whose form and colour are both exquisitely beautiful, lying under a clear sky, and still surmounted by the marble temples of its ancient gods; he will see the city lying at its feet; he will follow with his eye the long line of the Sacred Way to Eleusis; on this, the eastern, side of the city, he will trace the winding course of the Illissus; and beyond the walls, to the west, the olive groves of the Academy, through which the Cephissus flows into the harbour of the Piræus; from which his eye will pass over that glorious gulf to the hills of Salamis on the right, and on the left to the peaked summit of Oros in the island of Ægina, and, in the distance beyond them both, to the lofty crest of the Acrocorinthian citadel."

well as favourable accident seems to have contributed, throughout all time, to the production of forms and combinations that are not to be met with elsewhere. It is reasonable, then, to suppose that Italy is equally propitious to the poet, whose imagination is even more susceptible of refined and permanent impressions.

At Rome fresh honours and pleasures awaited Milton. Here he made the acquaintance of the librarian of the Vatican, Lucas Holstenius, who submitted to his inspection all the Greek authors, printed and in manuscript, which were under his charge; and who introduced him to the cardinal Barbarini, of whom it is related, that, desirous to confer a special mark of distinction upon the young English poet, upon the occasion of a musical entertainment at his palace, he received him at the door, and, conducting him by the hand into the assembly, presented him to his guests. As at Florence, he was again greeted with encomiums: — Salsilli writing a tetrastich in his praise, and Selvaggi the memorable distich —

> "Græcia Mæonidem, jactet sibi Roma Maronem:
> Anglia Miltonum jactat utrique parem"—

which was afterwards imitated so closely, without acknowledgment, by Dryden, in his well-known epigram, "Three poets in three distant ages born," &c. Milton acknowledged the courtesies of Holstenius and Barbarini in his Familiar Letters, and rewarded the Italian encomiasts in better verses than their own. It was at Barbarini's musical parties that Milton met the famous singer, Leonora Baroni, whom he has celebrated in three Latin epigrams. It appears that it was customary, at that time, for all literary persons who visited Rome to leave something behind in praise of the accomplishments of the melodious Leonora; and Milton could do no less than was done by others.

From Rome, Milton went to Naples in company with a hermit, who introduced him to that distinguished scholar

and promoter of the fine arts, Manso, marquis of Villa, the patron and biographer of Tasso and Marino. The friend of Tasso soon became the friend of Milton, although we learn, from a distich he presented to him, that he did not approve of his religious opinions: —

"Ut mens, forma, decor, mos, si pietas sic,
Non Anglus, verum hercle angelus ipse fores."

Milton has commemorated his gratitude to Manso in a very eloquent Latin poem (which the English reader is enabled to enjoy in Cowper's beautiful version), and which he sent him before his departure from Naples, in acknowledgment of "a thousand kind offices and civilities." In this poem Milton alludes to a design he had long entertained of celebrating, in verse, the exploits of king Arthur, and of restoring his martial knights "around the federal board."

Milton's zeal on religious subjects seems to have committed him to some indiscretions, although we are not informed what they were. It is probable, however, that they consisted in nothing more than free speaking and open defence of his convictions, contrary to the prudent advice of sir Henry Wotton. He tells us that he never dissembled his faith, but that, although he always defended the orthodox faith, he made a rule to himself never to begin a conversation on religion while he was in Italy. Some of his biographers assert that he visited Galileo in prison at Florence, and assign that circumstance as one of the causes which brought him under the displeasure of the Jesuits: but Mr. Walker's researches have established the fact, that Galileo never was imprisoned in Florence. Galileo, however, was imprisoned in Rome and Naples, and notwithstanding the scepticism of the biographers, it is tolerably clear that in one of those places he was visited by Milton.*

* There is no doubt that Milton visited Galileo, and in my opinion as little doubt that he visited him in prison. In the Areopagitica he mentions the fact, although he takes no notice of it in the outline of his travels. Speaking of Italy, he says, "There it was that I found and visited the fa-

During his stay at Naples, the commotions broke out in England, and the intelligence determined him to abandon his intention of proceeding to Sicily and Greece. He thought it was unworthy of an Englishman to be prosecuting pleasure abroad when the troubles of his country demanded his presence at home. With this resolution, he immediately prepared to return to England; but, on his way to Rome, learning from some officious friends that the Jesuits were forming a plot against him, in consequence of the dangerous liberty of speech in which he had indulged, he became only the more fixed in his resolution to visit Rome again. Upon this occasion, he went even more into public than before; appeared every where without reserve or disguise; and, in his own words, "again openly defended, as he had done before, the reformed religion in the very metropolis of popery." The course he adopted all throughout, was, no doubt, highly creditable to his integrity, and may, perhaps, have sufficiently gained the respect of his enemies to have turned them from their meditated revenge; but it certainly had the effect of depriving him of some distinctions which would otherwise have been bestowed upon him. He remained two months in Rome, and unmolested retraced his steps to Florence, where he was received with such an enthusiastic welcome that he lingered another two months with his friends there, making an excursion of a few days to Lucca, a pilgrimage of

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mous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought." Mr. St. John observes that "this passage might have been expected to decide the question whether Galileo was in prison when Milton visited him; but, unfortunately, it throws not sufficient light upon the subject, though the construction seems to favour the idea that he was still, when the poet saw him, a captive." As far as the meaning of the words is intelligible, it would seem that the construction of the sentence confirms this idea. At all events it must be allowed, that if it be not clear upon that point, it is still less susceptible of any other interpretation. "I visited," says Milton, the famous Galileo, a prisoner to the inquisition." If he did not mean that he was a prisoner to the inquisition when he visited him, no satisfactory reason can be assigned for thus linking the fact to his visit. He could not mean that he had been a prisoner previously, or that he was a prisoner afterwards, or he would have said so.

affection to the ancestral seat of the Deodate family. It is supposed that about this time Milton heard of the death of his beloved friend Charles Deodate, to whose memory he dedicated an affecting eclogue written after his return to England. Crossing the Apennines, he now passed by way of Bologna and Ferrara to Venice, where he remained a month, and shipped for England the books and music (for his father) he had collected in Italy; proceeding through Verona and Milan, and along the Alps, down lake Leman to Geneva. At this protestant city he made the acquaintance of Frederic Spanheim and John Deodate, two distinguished divines; of the latter of whom it is recorded, that he once preached in Venice in a trooper's dress, and converted a courtezan.* Taking leave of Geneva, after a few weeks, he returned home through France; and arrived in England, after an absence of fifteen months, just about the time when the second expedition of the royal forces under lord Conway were defeated by the Scots in 1639.

Finding that his father had left Horton, and was residing with his younger son, sir Christopher Milton, at Reading in Berkshire, he determined to commence that plan of life which he had previously projected, and which the circumstances of the times now appeared to render imperative upon him. His immediate resources were limited to the allowance his father was enabled to afford him, which could not have been considerable, since Milton's youth, as he tells us himself, had already been expensive, "in learning and voyaging about;" so he took lodgings, in the first instance, in St. Bride's

* The Deodate family still flourishes in Geneva. They were formerly of Lucca, which they were obliged to leave on account of their religion. According to a letter written by Theodore Deodate, the father of Milton's friend, dated 1675, a copy of which sir Egerton Brydges received from a member of the family, a learned librarian in the public library at Geneva, they were people of high consideration. "Nous avons tenu," says the writer, "le premier rang entre les familles nobles et patriciennes de tous tems à Lucques, et en sommes encore en possession : le père de mon grand-père logea en son palais l'empereur Charles Quinte : il étoit alors gonfalonier : auquel tems mon grand-père nacquit, et l'empereur fût son parrain, et le nomina Charles, et lui donna l'enseigne des diamans, qu'il portait en son col, à son départ," &c.

churchyard, Fleet Street, at the house of one Russell, a tailor, receiving for the purpose of education his two nephews, John and Edward Philips, whose mother had married a second time. This place, however, was so incommodious, not allowing him room for the disposition of his books, that he speedily removed to Aldersgate Street, where he took a "pretty garden-house at the end of an entry," a situation which he selected on account of its privacy and quiet. Here he opened an academy, near to his friend and tutor Gill, who, being driven out of St. Paul's churchyard, had also set up a school in the same street.

Having conducted Milton's life to this point, it is desirable to let him recapitulate the events of his youth and his travels in his own words. The following unaffected narrative is contained in a defence of his character against vindictive adversaries who assailed him with calumnies. It sets down with singular modesty the whole story of his education, the honours that were bestowed upon him by distinguished men, and his blameless intercourse with the world to that moment when, returning to England, he was drawn into the fierce polemical and political conflicts that shook the throne to its foundations. The object of this piece of simple autobiography Milton declares to be "to rescue his life from that species of obscurity which is the associate of unprincipled depravity;" and its value to posterity mainly consists in the great anxiety it discovers to establish the purity of the advocate as one of the essential elements of his utility to the cause in which he had embarked.

"This it will be necessary for me to do on more accounts than one: first, that so many good and learned men among the neighbouring nations, who read my works, may not be induced by this fellow's calumnies to alter the favourable opinion which they have formed of me, but may be persuaded that I am not one who ever disgraced beauty of sentiment by deformity of conduct, or the maxims of a free man by the actions of a slave;

and that the whole tenour of my life has, by the grace of God, hitherto been unsullied by any enormity or crime: next that those illustrious worthies, who are the objects of my praise, may know that nothing could afflict me with more shame than to have any vices of mine diminish the force or lessen the value of my panegyric upon them; and lastly, that the people of England, whom fate, or duty, or their own virtues, have incited me to defend, may be convinced from the purity and integrity of my life, that my defence, if it do not redound to their honour, can never be considered as their disgrace.

"I will now mention who and whence I am. I was born at London, of an honest family: my father was distinguished by the undeviating integrity of his life; my mother by the esteem in which she was held and the alms which she bestowed. My father destined me from a child to the pursuits of literature; and my appetite for knowledge was so voracious, that from twelve years of age I hardly ever left my studies, or went to bed before midnight. This primarily led to my loss of sight; my eyes were naturally weak, and I was subject to frequent headachs; which however, could not chill the ardour of my curiosity, or retard the progress of my improvement. My father had me daily instructed in the grammar-school, and by other masters at home: he then, after I had acquired a proficiency in various languages, and had made a considerable progress in philosophy, sent me to the university of Cambridge. Here I passed seven years in the usual course of instruction and study, with the approbation of the good, and without any stain upon my character, till I took the degree of master of arts.

"After this I did not, as this miscreant feigns, run away into Italy, but of my own accord retired to my father's house, whither I was accompanied by the regrets of most of the fellows of the college who showed me no common marks of friendship and esteem. On my father's estate, where he had determined to pass the

remainder of his days, I enjoyed an interval of uninterrupted leisure, which I devoted entirely to the perusal of the Greek and Latin classics; though I occasionally visited the metropolis, either for the sake of purchasing books, or of learning something new in mathematics or in music, in which I, at that time, found a source of pleasure and amusement. In this manner I spent five years, till my mother's death: I then became anxious to visit foreign parts, particularly Italy. My father gave me his permission, and I left home with one servant. On my departure, the celebrated Henry Wotton, who had long been king James's ambassador at Venice, gave me a signal proof of his regard, in an elegant letter which he wrote, breathing not only the warmest friendship, but containing some maxims of conduct which I found very useful in my travels. The noble Thomas Scudamore, king Charles's ambassador, to whom I carried letters of recommendation, received me most courteously at Paris. His lordship gave me a card of introduction to the learned Hugo Grotius, at that time ambassador from the queen of Sweden to the French court; whose acquaintance I anxiously desired, and to whose house I was accompanied by some of his lordship's friends. A few days after, when I set out for Italy, he gave me letters to the English merchants on my route, that they might show me any civilities in their power.

"Taking ship at Nice, I arrived at Genoa; and afterwards visited Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. In the latter city, which I have always more particularly esteemed for the elegance of its dialect, its genius, and its taste, I stopped about two months; when I contracted an intimacy with many persons of rank and learning; and was a constant attendant at their literary parties; a practice which prevails there, and tends so much to the diffusion of knowledge and the preservation of friendship.

"No time will ever abolish the agreeable recollections

which I cherish of Jacob Gaddi, Carolo Dati, Frescobaldo, Cultellero, Bonomatthia, Clementillo, Francisco, and many others.

"From Florence I went to Sienna, thence to Rome; where, after I had spent about two months in viewing the antiquities of that renowned city, where I experienced the most friendly attentions from Lucas Holstein, and other learned and ingenious men, I continued my route to Naples; there I was introduced by a certain recluse, with whom I travelled from Rome, to John Baptista Manso, marquis of Villa, a nobleman of distinguished rank and authority, to whom Torquato Tasso, the illustrious poet, inscribed his book on "Friendship." During my stay, he gave me singular proofs of his regard; he himself conducted me round the city, and to the palace of the viceroy; and more than once paid me a visit at my lodgings. On my departure, he gravely apologised for not having shown me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion.

"When I was preparing to pass over into Sicily and Greece, the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad, while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home.

"While I was on my way back to Rome, some merchants informed me that the English jesuits had formed a plot against me if I returned back to Rome, because I had spoken too freely of religion: for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion; but, if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I nevertheless returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character; and for about the space of two months I again openly defended,

as I had done before, the reformed religion in the very metropolis of popery.

"By the favour of God, I got back to Florence, where I was received with as much affection as if I had returned to my native country. There I stopped as many months as I had done before, except that I made an excursion of a few days to Lucca; and crossing the Apennines, passed through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice.

"After I had spent a month in surveying the curiosities of this city, and had put on board a ship the books which I had collected in Italy, I proceeded through Verona and Milan, and along the Leman Lake to Geneva.

"The mention of this city brings to my recollection the slandering More*, and makes me again call the Deity to witness, that in all those places, in which vice meets with so little discouragement, and is practised with so little shame, I never once deviated from the paths of integrity and virtue; and perpetually reflected that, though my conduct might escape the notice of men, it would not elude the inspection of God.

"At Geneva I held daily conferences with John Diodati, the learned professor of theology.

"Then pursuing my former route through France, I returned to my native country, after an absence of about one year and three months, at the time when Charles, having broken the peace, was renewing what is called the episcopal war with the Scots; in which the royalists being routed in the first encounter, and the English being universally and justly disaffected, the necessity of his affairs at last obliged him to convene a parliament.

"As soon as I was able, I hired a spacious house in the city for myself and my books; where I again with rapture renewed my literary pursuits, and where I calmly awaited the issue of the contest, which I trusted to the wise conduct of Providence, and to the courage of the people."

Milton, from the very commencement of his literary exercises, appears to have contemplated the production of

* Alexander More.

some great work that should transmit his name with lustre to posterity. This noble aim was always present to him, and throughout the laborious duties of a station that left him no leisure for the cultivation of the cherished purpose of his ambition, the prophetic spirit still filled his mind with visions of that mighty fabric, which, "long chusing and beginning late," he at last accomplished. His letters and treatises in the midst of the deadly strife of factions, contain numerous allusions to the sleepless resolution of his genius. He never forsook the hope of making himself immortal. In his "Defensio Secunda," and "Reason for Church Government," he speaks of the encouragement he had received from his Cisalpine and Italian friends, which cheered him "when he soared into the highest region of his fancy, with his garland and singing robes about him!" and adds, that he had determined to execute his work, *whatever it should be,* in his native language. It is evident that he was long undecided, not only as to the subject, but even as to the form which this work was to take. "However," he observes, "I propose something of highest hope and hardest attempting. But whether that epic form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso are a diffuse, and the book of Job, a brief model; or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art, and use judgment, is no transgression, but an enriching of art; and lastly, what king or knight before the conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero:" and so he goes on to consider whether the dramatic shapes of Sophocles and Euripides should be his choice, and at last, seems to incline to that divine subject, for which his habits, studies, and feelings especially marked him out. As if he had already (1641) proceeded some way towards the satisfaction of his thoughts, he says, "Neither do I think it shame to covenant with my knowing reader, that for some few years yet, I may go on trust with him toward the pay-

ment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine; like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amourist, or the temper fury of a riming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of dame Memory and her siren daughters; *but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with, the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases*." This prayer to the Spirit is almost identical with the invocation in "Paradise Lost."

> "And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
> Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
> Instruct me, for thou know'st."

And again, in the "Paradise Regained," he opens with a similar invocation. In Milton, this was not a mere formal compliance with the usages of epic poetry; it was a deep and solemn sense of the responsibility of his undertaking, and a supplication for power and support in its conduct. So gravely was he impressed with the sacred nature of his labours, that his mind at last acquired what may be described as an oracular tone. Bishop Newton assures us of having been informed by those who had an opportunity of conversing with Milton's widow, that she was wont to say, "he did really look upon himself as inspired." *

Whatever influence the excitements of the times may have had in diverting him from the execution of this project, they never divorced his thoughts from the contemplation of it. When he settled in Aldersgate Street,

see
dowed with gifts of the soul, which have been imparted to few of our race, and conscious of having consecrated them through life to God and mankind, he rose without effort or affectation to the style of an apostle" This sentence is specially directed to the remarkable opening salutation of the Treatise on Christian Doctrine. "John Milton, to all the Churches of Christ, and to all who profess the Christian faith throughout the world, peace and the recognition of the truth, and eternal salvation in God the Father, and in our Lord Jesus Christ."

he devoted himself to the formation of an academy upon principles more enlarged and philosophical than any existing system of education embraced. It was necessary for him to possess a respectable means of income, and none appeared so well adapted to his views as the instruction of youth. But as he could not descend to employ it merely as an instrument of pecuniary advantage, he reduced the results of his previous reflections on the subject to practice, in order to render his plan as perfect and as consistent with his views of a complete scholastic course as his opportunities permitted. One of his biographers * expresses surprise that Milton did not fly to the camp instead of sitting down to this sort of drudgery: but Milton anticipated all objections of that sort, by stating that he believed he could render the cause better service with his pen than his sword. The surprise of Mr. Fenton is in itself surprising. The pen of Milton had more power than a legion of troopers.

In the scheme of education laid down by Milton he was not unmindful of his great design. A portion of the studies he introduced, while they were consonant with the system of instruction to be observed by his scholars, were also essential to the completion of that vast circle of acquisitions he proposed to himself before he should begin his projected poem. Of this system of education much has been written, and it is not hazarding a very rash criticism to say that much has been written in vain. To carry it into effect it would demand a mind as largely gifted as his who devised it; but it does not follow that because it is beyond the reach of ordinary teachers, it is therefore impracticable. The grand assault that has been made upon it is on the ground of its comprehensiveness; but without descending into details, it must appear sufficiently obvious, that as no pupil can learn more than he possesses capacity to imbibe, so he will benefit most by that

* Fenton.

system which supplies him with the greatest choice in those studies which his capacity is adapted to receive. If the comprehensiveness consisted in an injudicious attempt to instruct students in a variety of things at the same time, the result would doubtless be that, attempting to obtain too many objects at once, they would acquire none perfectly. But the comprehensiveness was in the extent of progressive learning, and not the range of immediate tasks. Instead of teaching Greek and Latin through the elegiac, lyric, and epic poets, Milton taught them through such writers as Plutarch, Quintilian, and Cebes, proceeding thence to the authors who treat of natural philosophy, geography, astronomy, &c., and then to poetry and oratory. He also embraced in his plan the cultivation of the Eastern languages, and a complete course of divinity. The sciences were thus taught through the languages; and although Dr. Johnson attempts to turn this deeply-considered system into ridicule, by saying that we are not placed here to watch the growth of the plants, or the motions of the stars, but to "do good," it will scarcely be denied in this age, that a considerable portion of the "good" which men do is done by the help of their scientific knowledge. Education has made such rapid strides since Dr. Johnson's day, that his criticism upon Milton's "private boarding-school" seems less like the production of a man of erudition than of some dull-eyed monk fattening in a cell some two or three hundred years ago. When he tells us that our "speculations upon matter are voluntary and at leisure," we perceive in what comparative contempt he held the physical sciences from which the world has since reaped such wondrous advantages. The ingenious author of "Imaginary Conversations" would have a curious field of debate in bringing Johnson, Arkwright, and Watt together.

One part at least of Milton's system has been universally applauded. The Sundays were strictly devoted to religion. He made his scholars read a portion of the Greek Testament, upon which he afterwards delivered a

lecture, and then employed them in transcribing a system of divinity, compiled chiefly from the writings of Amesius, Wollebius, and the Dutch commentators. Of the laboriousness of his habits, he has elsewhere given us an account, which may, with propriety, be inserted here. This passage is contained, amongst others of a similar kind, in a reply to the slanderers who accused him of licentiousness. He says, "those morning haunts are where they should be, at home; not sleeping, or concocting the surfeits of an irregular feast, but up and stirring, in winter often ere the sound of any bell awake men to labour or devotion: in summer as oft with the bird that first rouses, or not much tardier, to read good authors, or cause them to be read, till the attention be weary, or memory have its full fraught; then with useful and generous labours preserving the body's health and hardiness, to render lightsome, clear, and not lumpish obedience to the mind, to the cause of religion, and our country's liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations, rather than to see the ruin of our protestation, and the enforcement of a slavish life." But it appears that, notwithstanding the severity and constancy of his labours, he occasionally relaxed, and once in three or four weeks would resign himself to an indulgence with some "young sparks of his acquaintance," particularly Mr. Alphry and Mr. Miller, who were "beaux of those times," but nothing near so bad, says his nephew Philips, as those now-a-days: with these gentlemen, "he made so far bold with his body, as now and then to keep a gaudy day." Nor were these the only pleasures he allowed himself. There were others of a more soothing kind. He used to spend an evening occasionally with the lady Margaret Legh, the daughter of the earl of Marlborough, the lord high treasurer and president of the council to James I., a woman of excellent wit, whose merits he has celebrated in his tenth sonnet.

From this date begins the controversial life of Milton, which carries us at once, and by a violent motion, out

of those dreams of poetry in which his spirit had hitherto indulged, into polemical contentions and the war of politics. Upon the side of the royalists, there were all the attributes and means of established institutions, the sympathies of fixed habits, much learning, the confidence of power, and great skill in combination. Upon that of the puritans there were wild resentments, wrongs to be appeased, injuries to be repaired, impatience of oppression, little erudition, less experience in party tactics, and tumultuous disorder. The struggle was brief, intense, and marked alike by blind fury and a distinct purpose. The people had been prohibited free discussion — taxes were imposed, arbitrary imprisonments and exorbitant fines exacted in open violation of the petition of rights — the church, asserting privileges abhorrent to its character, had become an instrument of the most galling social oppression — and nothing remained but to restore the liberties of the country by any means, however desperate, that offered. In this fearful contest, the vigilance and boldness of the parliament brought all the questions that agitated the nation to a speedy issue. The trial of Strafford, and the impeachment of the bishops, threw open the flood-gates that had pent in the passions of the people, which now burst out in an overwhelming flood. Milton, with the calmness of one who had long prepared his mind for the great occasion, now entered for the first time upon the scene of conflict. He had chosen his moment wisely, and selected his position with that high courage which guaranteed the energy with which he afterwards maintained it. His first publication was a work in two books, entitled a "Reformation of the Church of England," which he designed, he says, for the purpose of helping the puritans, "who were inferior to the prelates in learning." His statement of the convictions that led him to espouse with ardour the popular side, is necessary to a right understanding of the strength of his motives and the purity of his views. "The vigour of the parliament," he observes, "had begun to humble the pride of the bishops. As long as the liberty of speech

was no longer subject to control, all mouths began to be opened against the bishops; some complained of the vices of the individuals; others of those of the order. They said that it was unjust: that they alone should differ from the model of other reformed churches, and particularly the word of God. This awakened all my attention and my zeal: I saw that the way was opening for the establishment of real liberty; that the foundation was laying full deliverance of men from the yoke of slavery and superstition; that the principles of religion, which were the first objects of our care, would exert a salutary influence on the manners and constitution of the republic; and as I had from my youth studied the distinctions between religious and civil rights, I perceived that, if I ever wished to be of use, I ought at least not to be wanting to my country, to the church, and to so many of my fellow Christians, in a crisis of so much danger. I therefore determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my talents and my industry to this one important object. I accordingly wrote two books to a friend, concerning 'The Reformation of the Church of England.'" The tranquil earnestness, and pious feeling displayed in this passage—written in the very heat and convulsion of the warfare—indicate the spirit, equally free from sectarian fanaticism and political malignity, with which Milton embarked in the controversy. He appeared in the midst of the tumult to allay its rage. His object was the attainment of civil liberty, tempered and cemented by the principles of religion. He had no party but his country, and his creed was Christianity.

Once embarked in the cause, he persevered with a resolution worthy of the dignity of his character, and the supremacy of his talents. His productions followed each other with rapidity. He seized upon every point that was thrown up in a discussion, in which the most distinguished men of the age were engaged, and developed an amount of learning which has never before or since been drawn into the service of a war of pam-

phlets. Hall, bishop of Norwich, published an "Humble Remonstrance in defence of Episcopacy," written at the instance of the notorious Laud, which five ministers undertook to answer under the title of "Smectymnus," formed from the initials of their names.* Archbishop Usher replied to this treatise, and was answered by Milton in a work on Prelatical Episcopacy, the object of which was to disprove the apostolical origin of prelacy, and to release the church from a form of government which he considered to be incompatible with the true interests of religion. In the same year, 1641, he also published the "Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy," and animadversions upon bishop Hall's defence of the "Humble Remonstrance," closing the controversy with the "Apology for Smectymnus." Throughout the whole of these varied and argumentative pieces, he never ceased to urge the necessity of reducing the hierarchy, and instituting a plainer form of church government, such as prevailed amongst the reformed churches of Germany and Switzerland, modelled upon the simplicity of the apostolical ages. He did not, however, connect with this fundamental change any contemplated alteration in the monarchical principle of the state, but, on the contrary, endeavoured to show that the hierarchy, instead of being a support to the throne, was a weight and hinderance to its efficiency; and that the crown, freed from the association, would not only be more influential but more secure. All the writers who have reviewed this controversy have invariably taken that side which happened to harmonise with their own positions and predilections; and the victory of theological learning and logical dexterity has accordingly been bestowed alternately on Usher and Milton, Hale and the Smectymnian ministers. If the permanency of the church, which has survived the fury of the contest, may be admitted as a proof of the wisdom

* Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Mathew Newcomen, and William Spurston.

and ingenuity of its advocates, it must be allowed that Milton and his associates were worsted.

But Milton did not contend for victory. He fought for a great principle. While others struggled against oppression in detail and personal corruptions, he went to the root of the evil, and demanded its radical extirpation. While others laboured to relieve themselves from the tyranny of unconstitutional taxation, of hateful levies, and a masked inquisition, he asserted the rights of liberty, of thought, of private judgment, and the press, before which all such minute sufferings would have disappeared for ever. Such was the character of his mind. He saw in the arrogance of the bishops, not the particular errors of particular men, but the vices of a system under which all men were equally liable to profane the ministry. He desired not less to remove the present mischief but to prevent its recurrence. He was in advance of his time, and looked to the accomplishment of things that are perhaps yet to be matured through future ages. If we give the triumph of the occasion to Usher and Hall, perhaps a remoter posterity may bestow the glory of the argument on Milton.

Shortly after these publications had appeared, Milton's father, driven out, it would appear, from his retirement with his son Christopher, by the taking of Exeter, came to live with him in the city. The circumstance made no change in his household, for the old gentleman was content to be left in quiet to his rest and his devotions. Milton was now in his thirty-fifth year: his school was increasing; and finding, probably, the responsibilities of his situation growing upon him more and more every day, he began to regard marriage in some sort as a necessity. There is no reason to believe that he had previously formed any attachment, nor, indeed, that his mind, wholly engrossed in study, had seriously taken that direction; but, with that clearness and decision of action which was eminently characteristic of him, he had no sooner resolved upon the step than he carried it

into effect. Upon this event, the best information we possess is scanty and unsatisfactory. Milton did not communicate his intentions previously to any person. He neither asked counsel nor imparted confidence. Philips, who lived in his house, and was in habits of daily intercourse with him, knew nothing of the matter until the bride was brought home. He tells us that about Whitsuntide Milton took a journey into the country, every body supposing that he went merely upon an excursion of recreation, and that in a month afterwards he returned a married man, bringing the bride with him, and some of her nearest relatives, who remained to feast a few days, when they went back, leaving the lady with her husband. The whole account is mysterious, and in the last degree irreconcileable with the general candour and simplicity of Milton's life. But that which renders it still more extraordinary is that the lady was the daughter of a cavalier of fortune, a Mr. Powell, a justice of the peace at Forest Hill, in Oxfordshire. The match in all points of view was injudicious and ill assorted. It was evidently, to use the words of one of his old biographers, "struck up in great haste." Mr. Powell was a man of station and of an extensive style of living,—Milton was a laborious schoolmaster, accustomed to spare diet and hard study. The justice of the peace kept a house full of gay company—the schoolmaster kept a house full of dull pupils. The lady was accustomed to a life of variety and excitement—her husband to a life of monotony and seclusion. And to complete the contrast, the one was devoted to the interests of the cavaliers, and the other with still deeper zeal to the puritans. A marriage so strangely hurried, and presenting such unfortunate points of disagreement, was not likely to be happy in its results. At the end of a month the lady began to grow wearied of philosophy. The routine of scholastic discipline checked the natural current of her animal spirits*, and she longed

* Aubrey says, that no company visited her, and that she often heard her nephew cry and be beaten. But she must have known Milton's avocation

for the lights, and music, and dances of her father's liberal home. Her friends, it is presumed at her own desire, entreated to have her company for the remainder of the summer, a request to which Milton acceded on condition that she should return at Michaelmas. When Michaelmas arrived, however, she exhibited no disposition to be re-buried in the garden-house in Aldersgate Street, and although Milton repeatedly sent letters to her to remind her of her promise, she treated him and his applications with contemptuous silence. Finding that all his letters remained unanswered, he despatched a messenger—but the messenger was dismissed with rudeness and contumely. It is difficult to conceive by what kind of sophistry the friends of the lady could have persuaded themselves to support her in a course so derogatory to her honour, and dangerous to her happiness. If they had reason to think, when it was too late, that the marriage was an imprudent one, they ought to have taken some more open and reputable means of repairing the error. Obstinate silence was only calculated to bring the lady's name into discussion in a way not likely to terminate to her advantage; and by harbouring her against the remonstrances of her husband, without assigning a sufficient reason, they exposed her to the worst animadversions of suspicion and resentment. But Milton's revenge did not descend to petty retaliations. He resolved to repudiate her on the ground of disobedience. The measure was startling in conception and execution; but, as Mr. Fenton acutely observes, the marriage is more to be wondered at than the separation.

Having determined upon repudiating his wife, Milton was prompt to justify the act. In more tranquil times, perhaps, even he would have hesitated before he assailed so boldly the most sacred ties of society, but men's minds were then in such a ferment, that the wildest

before she married him, and ought not to have expected in an academy the free and careless life of a country mansion and independence.

theories were sure of a congenial and applauding audience. In 1644, he gave to the world that work which must always be regarded as a grave error of judgment, and a solemn perversion of truth, "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," followed by another publication enforcing the same principles; and the "Tetrarchordon, or Expositions upon the Four Chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage." In these pieces Milton attempted to establish, upon the authority of scripture, the right of a husband to put away his wife, for no better reason than because he disliked her temper: investing him with an authority of the most serious importance to the interests, morals, and welfare of society at large, which he was to be allowed to exercise at his own irresponsible caprice. If there were no parties to marriage but the husband and the wife—if the hopes, the education, the social position of children—the rights of property—and the countless inter-relations of the whole community, were not involved in it and directly affected by it, possibly such a discretion might be acted upon without much mischief; although even then it would be very doubtful whether laxity and whim and passion might not destroy the springs of domestic happiness, by leaving them unprotected, by depriving them not only of the safeguards of law, but of the salutary influences of opinion, nullifying the very utility of marriage by withdrawing its tenderest obligations. But this is supposing an impossible state of things; and in any other state the doctrines of Milton, profound in the research that is brought to bear upon them*, and dexterous beyond all precedent in the treatment, are as impracticable in application, as they would be destructive in their consequences. They are inapplicable wherever marriage is recognized, and superfluous where it is not. The whole experience of civil-

* Milton had so completely examined the subject in all its bearings—as he did every thing he took in hand—that he was consulted after the Restoration by a peer, the earl of Rutland, who had at that time a divorce bill in progress through the house of lords.

ization is against this monstrous and unjust assertion of prerogative; and the testimony of all time may be reasonably opposed to the convenient arguments of a dialectician, who, offended with his wife, endeavours to vindicate upon general principles the arbitrary proceeding by which he relieved himself from her presence.

These treatises, notwithstanding their eloquence and their erudition, produced scarcely any visible effect. Every singular and daring violation of the settled usages of society is certain of having some people to applaud it. Eccentricity is often embraced for its own sake, and sometimes for the sake of expediency. It is the easiest thing imaginable to make a new sect; for there are always individuals to be found, who, having already thrown off the restraints of society, are glad to shelter themselves under any doctrines that furnish them with the plausible pretext of acting upon principle. A few isolated persons, hanging loose about the community, adopted the new law of marriage, and were distinguished by the nickname of divorcists, or Miltonists; but for the most part the treatises were consigned to neglect, ridicule, or opprobium. One of Milton's antagonists addressed him in these complimentary terms—"You threw aside your wife, because your waspish spirit could not agree with her qualities, and your crooked phantasy could not be brought to take delight in her;" and another calls him a "shallow-brained puppy," and a "noddy who wrote a book about wiving." The derision of his assailants called out the whole force of Milton's invective, which, whenever he gave way to it, was as coarse as his better dispositions were refined and spiritual. One of his opponents, an anonymous writer, he designates "a serving man both by nature and function, an idiot by breeding, and a solicitor by presumption." Such were the controversial fruits of the "Doctrine of Divorce."

But more serious results were likely to have been brought about by the indignation of the presbyterian clergy, who, at their general assembly at Westminster,

expressed themselves so scandalised at the theology of Milton, that they had him cited before the house of lords. Their lordships, however, thinking that the best way was to suffer such extravagant doctrines to sink into oblivion, or, probably, not being much disposed to please the accusers, dismissed the offender. Milton never forgave the presbyterians, and ultimately abandoned them.

As soon as he had determined to put away his wife, and had satisfied his own conscience as to its propriety, neither satire nor presbyterianism could prevail with him to forego his resolution. The more effectually to demonstrate the seriousness of his convictions on the subject, he paid his addresses to an accomplished and beautiful girl, the daughter of one Dr. Davis. The circumstances in which he was placed might be expected to present a fatal barrier to any hopes of that sort; and the young lady, whatever her private inclinations might have been, gave no encouragement to his proposals. Fortunately, the pursuit of his unlawful object was suddenly arrested by an incident which gave another and a happier direction to his feelings. While he was at the house of a relation, whom he used to visit in the lane St. Martin's-le-Grand, his wife suddenly entered the room from an inner apartment, and flinging herself upon her knees, entreated his pardon for her fault.* At

* It has been suggested that Milton describes his own feelings on this occasion in the 10th book of "Paradise Lost," where Eve pleads to Adam for forgiveness. Some of the passages bear strongly upon Milton's own case, because the circumstances are similar. Thus, when Adam reproaches Eve for her pride, it may naturally be supposed that Milton was thinking of his wife's return into the country to her gay friends, and its consequences.

"But for thee
I had persisted happy; *had not thy pride*
And wandering vanity, when least was safe,
Rejected my forewarning, *and disdained*
Not to be trusted; *longing to be seen*,
Though by the devil himself, him overweening
To over-reach; but with the serpent meeting,
Fooled and beguiled: by him thou, I by thee,
To trust thee from my side," &c. 873—881.

Again:

"He added not, and from her turned; but Eve,
Not so repulsed, *with tears that ceased not flowing*,

first he was stern and inaccesible to prayers and tears: but the generosity of his nature, "more inclinable," says his nephew, "to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger or revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion, and a firm league of peace." This re-union was productive of true happiness. Probably both had gathered some wisdom from the follies that separated them, and the interval of reflection had not been without its store of blessings.* Milton's conduct was subsequently full of tenderness and liberality; and when his father-in-law, in common with other royalists, was compelled to fly from his estate, for which he afterwards compounded at a cost which reduced him to beggary, Milton received the whole of his wife's family into his house. At this time he had removed to a large establishment in Barbican, which was nearly filled by the group of persecuted cavaliers he protected under his roof. When they went away, "the house again," observes Philips, "looked like a house of the muses only, though the accession of scholars was not great. Possibly his having proceeded so far in the education of youth, may have been the occasion of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and schoolmaster; whereas it is well

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And tresses all disorder'd, at his feet
Fell humble; and, embracing them, besought
His peace." 909—913.

And then the reconciliation:

"*Soon his heart relented*
Towards her, his life so late, and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress," &c. 940—942.

Passages of this kind, that are true images of a poet's feelings and sufferings, always have an interest beyond mere poetical merit.

* It has been suggested, that the return of Milton's wife to implore forgiveness was not wholly an act of grace, and it is only just to give both sides of the question. When she refused to answer his letters, or to come back to his house, the king's party was victorious, and had a fair prospect of ultimate success; in which case, it is presumed, as she was a zealous royalist, and had gone (according to Aubrey) against her husband's consent into the king's quarters, she would never have acknowledged her marriage. But matters were changed when she supplicated for a reconciliation. The battle of Naseby had been fought, and Milton was making love to Miss Davis. It is a censorious world!

known he never set up for a public school, to teach all the young fry of a parish; but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to his relations, and the sons of gentlemen who were his intimate friends, and that neither his writing nor his way of teaching ever savoured in the least of pedantry." Upon this passage Dr. Johnson, with a vulgar malignity that is almost incredible, observes, "he did not sell literature to all comers at an open shop; he was a chamber milliner, and measured his commodities only to his friends!"

The toils of his school, constant as they were, did not interrupt his other labours for the benefit of mankind. His "Tractate on Education" appeared in 1644, and was followed by "Areopagitica, a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing." *

Of the "Tractate on Education" it may be enough to say, that it embodies the features of the plan adopted in his academy, and explains the whole of that round of studies to which he carefully directed the attention of his pupils, but which is not likely ever to be embraced in any future system of instruction.

The "Areopagitica" is on many grounds the noblest of Milton's prose works. In grandeur and power of style, richness and fertility of illustration, overwhelming energy of temperament, and the completeness with which every part and ramification of the subject is explored and laid open, this oration may be proudly compared with the most eloquent productions of antiquity. There are some works of Milton's more extensive in their reach, and more magnificent in the accumulation and exhibition of recondite learning; but the "Areopagitica" transcends them all in popular interest, and the vigorous assertion of principles about which all mankind, in all ages, and under all forms of government, are alike concerned. It is the foundation upon

* The last edition of the "Areopagitica" was publishedin 1836, in the Select Prose Works of Milton, with a Preliminary Discourse and Notes by Mr. St. John. Whoever is curious about Dr. Johnson's scurrilous injustice to Milton, may be recommended to peruse Mr. St. John's Discourse, in which he will find that disgraceful biography treated at some length.

which all subsequent defences of the liberty of the press have been raised; and contains the ground-work of all that ever can be urged on the subject. New cases may arise to call up new advocates, but the elements with which they will be required to deal are immutable and imperishable. You may strike out new applications of old truths, or embellish them with a younger eloquence; but for the truths themselves — the heart of this great controversy, from which the circulating arteries flow, and to which they perpetually revert — you must go to the "Areopagitica."* Yet this treatise, like all the works of that age, is deficient in some of the graver requisites of logic. Its parts want coherence; the argument is not conducted to a close; vast materials are gathered into a series of statements, from which the reader is left to draw his own conclusions; and although the propositions to be established are at every step as obvious as light, yet they are never stated. This defectiveness in the mere structure of such treatises was common amongst the writers of that period. Politics and morals had not yet been reduced to general principles. They were regarded as topics on which men displayed their learning or their zeal, but were never treated with scientific accuracy. A writer asserted a principle because he believed it to be true; but it never occurred to him that it was necessary to demonstrate its truth. This art was reserved for a later age. Perhaps the only author of the period referred to who can be said to have reasoned with exactness was Hobbes. Milton certainly did not; he crowded the page with figures, instances, and invectives, carrying away all objections by the force of his own consciousness of power, and the impetus it received from strong convictions; but he rarely ventured on a de-

* Lord Mansfield, in a case of copyright, referred to a passage in the "Areopagitica," in which Milton expresses himself unwilling to touch that part of the law which "preserves justly every man's copy to himself." Lord Mansfield observed, "The single opinion of such a man as Milton, speaking after much consideration on the very point, is stronger than any inferences from gathering acorns, and seizing a vacant piece of ground; when the writers, so far from thinking of the very point, speak of an imaginary state of nature before the invention of letters."

finition or a syllogism. The reader might *feel* that he was right, and even be persuaded to *think* him so; but he could not refer to the specific page that converted him. Milton furnishes immense data for argument, but seldom argues himself, and never with precision. It is all a fine burst of eloquence, in which facts derived from all nations and historians are clustered together in impetuous disorder, with scraps of allegory and passages from ancient authors, shreds from the poets to confirm some important truth, and antique proverbs to prove its use and universality; the whole resembling an edifice of great general solidity, and not wanting in incidental graces, but so irregular and eccentric, that you must not be surprised to find the door in the roof, or the staircase outside the walls, if, indeed, you find either one or the other.

Treatises of this kind are the love-children of Reason and Imagination, and generally betray the ardent characteristics of their birth.

The circumstance which extracted from Milton this passionate and powerful appeal, was a resolution passed by the parliament to the effect "that no book, pamphlet, or paper should be henceforth printed, unless the same were first approved and licensed by such, or at least one of such, as shall be thereto appointed." The practice of licensing was so utterly obnoxious to the tenets of public liberty, for which the great bulk of the people were then contending, that the "Areopagitica" created an universal sensation amongst all classes, and there is no doubt that it ultimately had the effect of convincing the licenser out of his place. Gilbert Mabbot, who held that office, requested to be discharged in 1649, for certain reasons which were all drawn from the "Areopagitica:" — 1. Because his authority had been infringed, several books having been printed without his licence. (This was a mere personal reason, and had nothing to do with the general question, which could not be affected either way by the respect or contempt in which the licenser's functions were held.) —2. Because, in its original institution,

the practice of licensing was illegal.—3. Because it was a monopoly.—And 4. Because he considered it was lawful to print any book, without a licence, if the author subscribed his name to it, so as to be responsible to the law for its contents. These reasons were laid before the council, and by them submitted to the house, who approved of them; and Gilbert Mabbot was accordingly dismissed at his own desire, and the office of licenser abolished.*

In the following year, Milton collected his Latin and English poems, and published them in one volume at

* Notwithstanding the abolition of the office of licenser, the press continued to be exposed to checks and hinderances. The direct restraint was removed, but the risk after publication often had the effect of total suppression. The puritans who were clamorous for liberty on the most extensive scale when they were out of power, became as tyrannical in power as the royalists, and the royalists became as bad, in turn, as the puritans; and the government of the revolution as bad as either. Public writers had sufficient reason to complain of the difficulties that were thrown in their way after the licenser was removed, and might almost have been justified in desiring to return to the old system, which was recommended at least by brevity and simplicity. The stamp taxes on the journals were a source of considerable vexation, which was not a little increased by the arbitrary conduct of the clerks of the post office in keeping back, with the sanction of their superiors, such publications as were not approved of, substituting others in their place. This was a mode of making war upon the liberty of the press more harassing than that of the licenser, and not unlikely to provoke those very excesses which it ought to be the object of all good government to furnish no excuse for. We find the "Craftsman," a weekly paper commenced in 1726, for the especial and avowed purpose of laying bare the corruptions prevailing in all crafts, from king-craft downwards, openly remonstrating with the government that while it contributed nearly 1000*l*. per annum in stamp duty to the exchequer, it was subjected to the capricious tyranny of the post-office clerks. "The general post-office," says the writer, "which was established by act of parliament for the common benefit and advantage of all the people of England, is, as it hath been lately managed, another considerable restraint upon some particular kind of writings; for, unless I am very much misinformed, the clerks of the post-office (who seem to be a sort of licensed hawkers over the whole kingdom) have received strict and repeated injunctions not to send any of our papers to their correspondents; who make daily complaints that this journal is suppressed, as the clerks inform them, by authority; and others, calculated for quite different purposes, are sent to them instead of the Craftsman, contrary to their directions." The busiest part of the "Craftsman's" avocations appears to have been the defence of the liberties of the press against invidious enemies, who, under a variety of disguises, attempted to reduce it to servitude. He assigns many reasons why the press ought to be free, and, amongst others, that it enables every man to be of service to his country. In arbitrary dominions no man ever thinks of serving his country. "If this privilege of publishing our thoughts with freedom," says the Craftsman, "should ever be taken away or restrained, few persons in England besides those whose fortune makes them considerable enough to become legislators, would ever have any opportunity of being useful or beneficial to their country; but whilst this remains, *even I, inconsiderable and low as I am in the world, may happen to do some good; and I flatter myself that I shall do it in the very instant I am writing to you.*"

the instance of Moseley, a bookseller in Paul's Churchyard.* Having had occasion to allude in terms of reprehension to Moseley's interpolation of a poem in an edition of Cowley's works, it is only just to observe in this place, that Moseley on many occasions distinguished himself as an enterprising and discriminating publisher; one who knew more than the outside and marketable value of books, and who sometimes ventured into print himself, to introduce his authors to the public. In this edition of Milton's poems — the first acknowledged by the auth[illegible] — [illegible]y supplied a curious preface entitled "The Stationer to the Reader," and subscribed it with his own name. In this preface he says, — "It is not any private respect of gain, gentle reader, for the slightest pamphlet is nowadayes more vendible than the words of learnedest men; but it is the love I have to our own language that hath made me diligent to collect and set forth such peeces, both in prose and verse, as may renew the wonted honour and esteem of our English tongue." He then goes on to say, that these poems had received the highest commendations from the Academies, foreign and domestic, and the "unparalleled attestation" of the Provost of Eton; and refers to the encouragement he had received from the most ingenious men for the publication of Mr. Waller's "late choice peeces," as having induced him once more to "adventure into the world, presenting it with these evergreen and not to be blasted laurels. The author's more peculiar excellency in these studies was too well known to conceal his papers, or to keep me from attempting to solicit them from him. Let the event," he adds, "guide itself which way it will, I shall deserve of the age, by bringing into the light as true a birth as the Muses have brought forth

* The following is a literal copy of the title: "Poems of Mr. John Milton, both English and Latin, compos'd at several times. Printed by his true copies. The Songs were set in Musick by Mr. Henry Lawes, Gentleman, of the King's Chapel, and one of his Majesties Private Musick. Printed and Publish'd according to Order. London: Printed by Ruth Raworth, for Humphrey Moseley, and are to be sold at the signe of the Princes Arms, in Paul's Church Yard. 1645."

since our famous Spenser wrote, whose poems in these English ones are as rarely imitated, as sweetly excell'd." The unfading interest attached to the most trifling particulars concerning these early editions, will render a brief bibliographical digression respecting the contents of this volume acceptable to all true lovers of poetry.

Moseley's publication was the first in which Milton's name appeared; but two of the poems it contained had been published before: "Comus" anonymously, and "Lycidas" with his initials. "Comus" was published in quarto, in 1637, by Humphrey Robinson [Humphrey seems to have been a favourite with the Muses], "at the signe of the three pigeons in Paul's Church Yard," with the motto,

> "Eheu! quid volui misero mihi? Floribus austrum
> Perditus."

The volume was edited by Lawes, who composed the music, and who acted at Ludlow Castle the two characters of the Shepherd Thyrsis and the Spirit. He dedicates the masque to the lord Bracley; and observes, that he has been compelled to print it in consequence of the importunity of friends who desired copies. "Although not openly acknowledged by the author," he says, "yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to the necessity of producing it to the public view." "Lycidas" was published in a slender quarto by the printer to the University of Cambridge, along with a variety of other pieces on the death of Mr. Edward King. The whole collection was contributed by college friends, and contained three poems in Greek, nineteen in Latin, and thirteen in English, introduced by a panegyric and biography, supposed to have been written either by Milton or Henry More. It has been conjectured that Milton was solicited to write "Lycidas," which is consistent with the manner of its original publication. It stands last in the collection, and is

distinguished from the rest (most of which have their authors' names) by his initials. With these exceptions, and the ode on Shakspeare, which was prefixed to an edition of Shakspeare's poems printed in 1632, and another in 1640, none of the pieces in the volume issued by Moseley appear to have been previously printed; so that Milton cannot be said to have been known as a poet until he was upwards of seven and thirty years of age.

The sonnets, "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Lycidas," and the smaller pieces, constitute the first part of the volume, which is followed by "Comus," with Lawes' original dedication, and the letter from sir Henry Wotton*, which has been so often referred to in testimony of Milton's genius. The third part contains the Latin poems, prefaced by the brief stanzas of Mansus, Salsilli, and Salvaggi, and an Italian ode by Francini. This edition is embellished with a portrait of Milton.

Some intention is said to have been entertained of giving the poet an appointment as adjutant-general in sir William Waller's army, but the new-modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design.† The authority from which this supposition is derived assigns so vague an excuse for the intention not having been fulfilled, that we might be justified in suspecting it never was formed. The new-modelling of the army,

* As this letter has become, by frequent and indeed unavoidable allusions in all the biographies of Milton, almost an integral part of his life, and as it is not accessible in the well known editions, the passage which alludes to "Comus" will probably be interesting to such readers as may not have chanced upon it elsewhere. After regretting that he had not seen more of Milton during his stay in the neighbourhood of Eton, sir Henry acknowledges the receipt of a copy of "Comus:"—"Since your going you have charg'd me with new obligations, both for a very kinde letter from you dated the sixth of this month, and for a dainty piece of entertainment which came therewith. Wherein I should much commend the tragical parts, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language: 'ipsa mollities.' But I must not omit to tell you, that I now onely owe you thanks for intimating unto me (how modestly soever) the true artificer. For the work itself I had view'd som good while before, with singular delight, having received it from our common friend Mr. R. in the very close of the late R's poems, printed at Oxford, whereunto it was added (as I now suppose) that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of stationers, and to leave the reader 'con la bocca dolce.'"

† Philips.

instead of offering an obstruction to the design, would rather have opened an opportunity for carrying it into effect. It is much more likely that the offence Milton had given the presbyterians was the real cause why the design, if contemplated, was abandoned.

About 1647, Milton's father died, and was buried in the chancel of St. Giles's church, Cripplegate; and in the spring of that year, his wife's friends having left him, after being enabled through his influence with the ascendant party to recover their estates, he removed to a small house in High Holborn, which opened at the back into Lincoln's Inn Fields. Here he continued his studies and scholastic labours until the execution of the king. This event once more called him from his retirement, and he published a defence of the act, entitled "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates: proving that it is lawful, and hath been held so through all ages, for any who have power, to call to account a Tyrant or wicked King, and, after due conviction, to depose and put him to death, if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected or denied to do it." According to most of the biographies, this extraordinary treatise was written in consequence of the clamours raised by the presbyterians against those who had been concerned in the regicide; but Wood supposes, and there is enough of external evidence to show that he supposes rightly, that it was written before the execution of the king. In the second edition new passages were introduced, to give greater point to its immediate application; but the work was undoubtedly prepared originally in anticipation of a catastrophe which Milton knew was inevitable. This fact does not much alter the case; for whether it was composed before or after the death of the king, the argument is of equal force, insisting less upon the execution as a substantive act, than upon the right of the people to bring the first magistrate to justice for certain violations of the constitution, which had already taken place. But as, happily for mankind, such examples are rare, and form striking exceptions to the ordinary

progress of governments, the treatise can now be regarded only as a curious historical relique. Upon such questions men must always be guided by the nature of the circumstances they are required to decide upon; precedents are valueless, and general principles are wholly inapplicable. To assert that the people are justified in deposing a tyrant and putting him to death, is nothing more than the assertion of the source from whence the sovereign derives his authority, and of the supremacy of justice over the throne itself; propositions which no man who thinks that kings were made for the people, and not the people for kings, will be disposed to deny. But they bring us only to an admission of the right to sit in judgment upon kings; the question to be determined is, what constitutes the tyranny which justifies deposition and death? And this is a question upon which no past treatises or precedents can throw any light: it cannot be resolved by a reference to what other generations thought or did; it must be decided by personal considerations,—by a careful examination of surrounding circumstances, remote influences, and ultimate objects,—by the spirit of existing institutions, and the state of public opinion. One age may regard as extreme tyranny that which a previous age endured with patience, or held to be a safeguard. Under a feudalism men adapt themselves to restraints which would drive them into rebellion under a monarchy, and which could not co-exist with a republic. The progress of education softens the rigour with which crimes against the commonwealth are treated: as men become more capable of thoroughly understanding their rights, they acquire increased security in their exercise, and have less need of terrible examples to enforce them. The moral power supersedes the physical, and penal retribution gradually gives way to more calm and impressive punishments. Charles I. of England lost his head in the seventeenth century, and Charles X. of France was banished in the nineteenth: their cases are not

similar; but if they could have changed places, their punishments would have been the same.

What, therefore, might have been true—so to speak—in Milton's time, is true no longer. The doctrines that then brought a sovereign to the block would now expel him from the throne. The essence of the treatise alone survives, and remains true for ever—the indefeasible right of the people to protect their liberties against aggression. If this great end be answered by means more consistent with an improved condition of popular intelligence, something more is gained than the mere assertion of liberty—the proof of its omnipotence in an enlightened age. When a nation can recover its freedom without staining a sword, it demonstrates to the world the feebleness of the oppression it has vanquished.

Whatever may be said of the conduct of the parliament to Charles I., there can be little doubt that the conduct of the Presbyterians was base, cowardly, and fickle. They were the first to urge on the war, and provoke that fury against the king which could not afterwards be appeased but by his death; and then they denounced the cruelty to which they had been accessory in the first degree themselves. Milton convicts them of their perfidy and inconstancy in this treatise, as a preliminary to the consideration of the sentence itself. This is indeed the grand moral of the work—it shows the tendency of popular tumults to swell beyond the control of those who inconsiderately excite them.

This treatise, upon the death of the king, was followed by a pamphlet of temporary interest on the revolt of the Scotch Presbyterians at Belfast, who abandoned the parliament to join the earl of Ormond. And the next work that engaged Milton's attention was the "History of England," avowedly undertaken with a view to advocate the superiority of a republican form of government, and in the hope of preventing for ever the restoration of a monarchy. He did not, however, complete his design, as other occupations called him away to more

important duties; but the history, as far as it is completed, is extremely curious and interesting, presenting a succession of romantic incidents, during the times of the ancient Britons, in which the fabulous exploits of king Arthur and his knights (upon which he had formerly intended to found an epic), the story of Lear and his daughters, and all the exciting and pathetic narratives of chivalry and love to be found in the old annals, are expounded with the enthusiasm of a poet rather than the zeal of an historian.

The publication of "Icon Basilike" drew him again into the field of political controversy. This celebrated book was written for the purpose of endeavouring to produce a favourable impression on the public mind during the trial of the king; but such were the activity and vigilance of the authorities, that its publication was frustrated until after the execution had taken place. An obscure, intemperate, and corrupt scribbler*, attempted to prove that Milton bribed a printer to insert a prayer into the "Icon" from the "Arcadia" of sir Philip Sidney (a work which king Charles was known to be in the frequent habit of reading), for the purpose of enabling him to accuse the king in his answer of impiety, hypocrisy, and fabrication. This absurd story, one might suppose, carried its own refutation on the surface; for it would hardly have been worth the trouble it must have cost to discover and prevail upon the printer for so paltry an object. If the printer had been really bought over, they would have turned him to better account; and instead of endeavouring to fasten upon the king the charge of stealing a prayer, they would probably have endeavoured to show that he discarded prayers altogether. Yet, ridiculous as this clumsy invention is, Dr. Johnson adopts it: he says that Milton is "suspected" of having interpolated the book; and then, quoting Milton's animadversions upon the supposed interpolation, he *adds*, with a sneer, that "they who could so noisily censure it, with a little

* Wagstaffe. Vindication of King Charles the Martyr. London, 1711.

extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse" *; as if, contriving any thing, they would not have contrived something worse. The only commentary this pungent antithesis deserves is, that the imputed interpolation — as Dr. Johnson might easily have satisfied himself — is an untruth. The king handed his private prayers on the scaffold to Dr. Juxon, bishop of London: one of them was from the "Arcadia" — Juxon was cognizant of the fact, and would have vindicated his master from the charge of adopting that prayer if he could.

The "Iconoclastes" of Milton, written in reply to the "Icon," assumes Charles I. to be the author of that work. It is hardly necessary to observe, that subsequent research has satisfactorily proved that the book was composed by Gauden, who was afterwards advanced to a bishopric in consideration of the service he had rendered to the royal party by that strange fabrication. Gauden's authorship was acknowledged at court; his wife and his curate were in the secret, and a sufficient mass of documentary evidence has been preserved to place the matter beyond all reasonable doubt.† It is said that Milton wrote the "Iconoclastes" by command, which is not improbable, as, about the same time, his distinguished talents and daily increasing reputation recommended him so highly to the notice of the new government, that the council of state invited him to accept the office of their secretary for foreign languages. They certainly could not have found a man in England whose profound philological learning, varied accomplishments, and practical habits so admirably adapted him for the appointment.‡

Milton was now in personal correspondence with the

* What a contrast this venomous remark of Johnson's offers to the exclamation of sir James Mackintosh, that the *name* of Milton refutes the calumny!

† The whole controversy is embodied in an able article by sir James Mackintosh on Dr. Wordsworth's book, "Who wrote Icon Basilike?" in the Edinburgh Review, No. LXXXVII.

‡ The appointment was dated 15th March, 1648-9.

heads of that mighty movement which he had all along so strenuously supported; nor was he long engaged in their service until a fresh occasion opened for the exercise of his zeal. The celebrated Salmasius, employed by Charles II., who is stated to have given him a hundred Jacobuses for the performance, had just published his "Defensio Regis," and Milton was called upon to answer it. For this production, entitled "Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio," he received 1000*l.* from the parliament *; but he tells us that he undertook it without any expectation of reward.† This was the most important controversy, on account of the great reputation of his antagonist, in which Milton was ever involved.

"Since the death of the illustrious younger Scaliger," says the Rev. Mr. Mitford, who has taken some pains to give an accurate account of Milton's opponent, "no scholar had acquired the reputation of Salmasius; not so much, as Johnson supposed, for his skill in emendatory criticism, in which he was excelled by many of his contemporaries, as for his great knowledge of antiquity, the multiplicity of his attainments, and his immense research in ancient languages. His "Commentary on Solinus," and his treatise "De Re Hellenistica," are imperishable monuments of his fame. Grotius alone could compete with him; and if Grotius were at all inferior, which I know not, in the extent of his information, he far excelled Salmasius in the correctness of his judgment, the distribution of his knowledge, and the more luminous arrangement of his erudition. Grotius was an enlightened philosopher, as well as a profound scholar; and the names of these two illustrious men were in commendation not often disjoined." This was an adversary worthy of Milton; and the glory of his triumph over him would have been complete, if he had not mixed up with the great questions at issue some personal invectives, that reduced the dignity of his refutation.

It can hardly be denied that Milton defeated Salma-

* Toland

† Defensio Secunda.

sius. He had the weight of authority, the confidence of popularity, and the strength of reason on his side. All the learning of Salmasius could not succeed in the attempt to defend the conduct of the king. Hobbes avows himself unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst; but it is not easy to conceive how such a man as Hobbes could have found himself in such a dilemma. Salmasius maintains the divine right and irresponsibility of kings — Milton, the sovereignty of the people, and the responsibility of magistrates: there might be some doubt as to whose language was the best, but there could be none as to who had the best of the argument.

Salmasius was married to a scold, — a circumstance with which Milton taunts him. But his wife was proud of her authority over so great a man; and probably that may have diminished the fury of her temper. In her admiration of him, it appears, she sometimes made him look ridiculous; insisting, for instance, upon his appearing at the court of Christina of Sweden in scarlet breeches and robes, with a black cap and a white feather. Fortunately there does not seem to have been any jealousy mixed up with these arrogant qualities; for when Salmasius was lying ill of the gout at Stockholm, Christina (who was also plagued with a dominant temper and an impetuous will) used to come to his bedside, and indulge in a thousand freaks such as suited the royal humours of a queen. Salmasius, stung by the allusion to his domestic circumstances, reproached Milton (who by this time was beginning to find his sight fail him) with having lost his eyes in the contest. Salmasius did not live to publish this answer; but it appeared upon his death, which happened soon after at Spa, where he went to drink the writers; when Milton, in his "Defensio Secunda," rejoined with encreased power and asperity, claiming the merit of having shortened the life of his antagonist. Such were the petty and malignant feelings that were permitted to

enter into a discussion between two of the greatest scholars the world has ever seen.

It was asserted that Milton's answer to Salmasius greatly reduced that learned person in the estimation of his contemporaries; but that is an exaggeration. As to the story of his death being hastened by it, there is scarcely any ground for supposing that it had the least effect even upon his spirits. His posthumous answer is as strongly marked with exultation as his original treatise was with confidence. A man like Salmasius, who had received so much applause from all quarters, could not be very easily impressed with fears for his fame. His book, unquestionably, had but an indifferent sale, compared with Milton's Defence; but the arguments, it contained, were not so palatable to the public. The Icon Basilike ran through forty-seven editions; extending, it is said, to 48,500 copies: but no other work on that side could be expected to excite so much curiosity.

The first answer to Salmasius produced two replies, to each of which Milton published a separate rejoinder, and in each of which, by a curious coincidence, he charged the authorship upon a wrong person, lavishing the grossest abuse upon his supposed antagonist. One of these replies was written by one Rowland; but Milton accused bishop Bramhall of the work, and in a rampant spirit of revenge denounced him for the vices of his private life.* The other was written by Peter du Moulin; but Milton assailed Alexander More (who merely published it), a man of considerable attainments and of high estimation, and exposed some of his continental amours with a bitterness degrading only to himself.† The heats of controversy hurried Milton

* Milton's answer was published in the name of his nephew Philips, but it was evidently in substance his own.

† Du Moulin, the real author of the piece entitled Regii Sanguinis clamor adversus Parricidas Anglicanos, was placed in serious danger in consequence of Milton's having charged More, or Morus as he is sometimes called, with the authorship; for More, afraid of the consequences of the imputation, took care to let it be known who was the author. Fortunately for Du Moulin, Milton persisted in the charge rather than acknowledge

into excesses which his most ardent admirers must lament. He was not always content with slaying his victim — he sometimes added the savage dance and sanguinary libation.

Milton was now blind. This calamity was fully confirmed in 1652, after he had been in the discharge of the duties of the foreign office for four years, during which time he struggled with imperfect vision through his arduous labours by the help of his nephew, Edward Philips. That he attributed his blindness to the zeal with which he had devoted himself to the public cause, is evident from his well-known sonnet to his faithful friend Cyriac Skinner.

"Cyriac, this three-years-day these eyes, though clear," &c.

His eyes had long suffered from the intensity of his studies; and when he was engaged to answer Salmasius, one of them was almost gone. The physicians warned him not to proceed, predicting the loss of both as the consequence; but the choice between his duty and his eyes was one which he was not long determining. His enemies — no more scrupulous than himself in seizing upon private misfortunes — pronounced his blindness to be a judgment upon him. To this cruel piece of cant, he replied in his "Defensio Secunda" — a splendid composition, — by observing, that it was not so wretched to be blind, as not to be able to endure blindness; that it was a deprivation which might befall any man, which had happened to the most illustrious and virtuous men, and which every one ought to be prepared to endure. He then calls God to witness that he was not conscious of having committed any offence which might have deservedly marked him out as a fit object for such a visitation; and that he had never written any thing which he did not think agreeable to truth, justice, and

himself guilty of the mistake; and the parliament, unwilling to contradict publicly the great advocate of their cause, suffered the true author to escape.

piety. Alluding to the advice of the physicians, he says "their premonition caused no hesitation, and inspired no dismay; I would not have listened to the advice even of Esculapius himself from the shrine of Epidauris, in preference to the suggestions of the heavenly monitor within my breast; my resolution was unshaken, though the alternative was either the loss of my sight or the desertion of my duty; and I called to mind those two destinies which the oracle of Delphi announced to the son of Thetis. I considered that many had purchased a less good by a greater evil — the meed of glory by the loss of life; but that I might procure great good by little suffering; that, though I am blind, I might still discharge the most honourable duties, the performance of which, as it is something more durable than glory, ought to be an object of superior admiration and esteem; I resolved, therefore, to make the short interval of sight I was permitted to enjoy as beneficial as possible to the public interest." These beautiful sentences are full of such cheerful philosophy, that they ought to be placed next those affecting passages in "Sampson Agonistes" and "Paradise Lost," where, alluding to this great calamity, the tenderer humanity of Milton may be said to melt into tears. Those passages are "as familiar as household words" to all readers; but the extract just recited from the "Defensio Secunda," exhibiting the firmness with which he bore his sufferings, is not so generally known.

The "Defensio Secunda" is altogether a remarkable production, and certainly the most memorable work extant in reference to the heroes of the civil war. It has been remarked, that while the puritans were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. Almost all the publications in which the events and the men of those times are chronicled—certainly all those that possess an extensive popularity—are upon the side of the royalists. This fact gives an additional interest to the "Defensio Secunda," in which the characters of

Cromwell, Bradshaw, Fairfax, and the generals in the parliamentary army are drawn with consummate power, but in the language of enthusiastic eulogy. Dr. Johnson acknowledges the elegance of the flattery, but calls it servile, and quotes a part of the character of Cromwell as a specimen of its eloquence, but apparently for the purpose of indulging in a contemptible verbal criticism. If the character of Cromwell, as it is drawn by Milton, be an exaggeration on one side, the portrait by Cowley is no less extravagant on the other. They would make excellent companion pictures, were it not for the difference of power visible between the two artists. The one is an historical study—the other a satirical sketch.

From his house in High Holborn, Milton had removed to the house of one Thomson, in Charing Cross, next door to the Bull Head Tavern, opening into the Spring Gardens, (it is pleasant to note all these localities of great men, that in passing over the spots they inhabited, the imagination may visit their vanished tenements,) where he remained until lodgings provided for him by government in Scotland Yard, Whitehall, were ready for his reception. It was here that the total loss of vision came upon him. His friend Leonard Philatus, envoy of the duke of Parma to the king of France, offered to consult Thevenot, a French physician who had acquired celebrity as an oculist, concerning his case, if he would give him an account of it; and Milton, that he might not seem to refuse any assistance, furnished a statement of the gradual progress of his blindness, which is not only interesting as it concerns him, but curious in itself. After detailing the first approaches of the malady, he says,—"A certain iris began to surround the light of the candle if I looked at it; soon after which, on the left part of the left eye (for that was some years sooner clouded), a mist arose, which hid every thing on that side; and looking forward, if I shut my right eye, objects appeared smaller. My other eye also, for the last three years, failing by

degrees, some months before all sight was abolished, things which I looked upon seemed to swim to the right and left. Certain inveterate vapours seem to possess my forehead and temples, which after meat especially, quite to evening, generally urge and depress my eyes with a sleepy heaviness. Nor would I omit, that whilst there was as yet some remainder of sight, I no sooner lay down on my bed, and turned on my side, but a copious light dazzled out of my shut eyes; and as my sight diminished, every day colours gradually more obscure flashed out with vehemence; but now that the lucid is in a manner extinct, a direct blackness, or else spotted, and as it were woven with ash colour, is used to pour itself in. Nevertheless the constant and settled darkness that is before me, as well by night as by day, seems nearer the whitish than the blackish, and the eye rolling itself a little, seems to admit I know not what smallness of light, as through a chink." The minuteness of this account is worthy of observation, not less than the felicity with which that strange flux and confusion of colours and shadows in the coming darkness are brought before us in a verbal description. We feel the floods of palpable blindness, sprinkled with twinkling stars, the dreamy motion of things swinging to and fro in the black void, the vapours rifting in masses against the rays of the unseen sun, and that distant stream of glory, attenuated to the smallest point which for ever seemed to pierce the aching ball, but revealed nothing in its radiant passage but a blank thread of light!

In these melancholy circumstances, Milton was still permitted to hold his office, and Mr. Philip Meadowes was appointed as his assistant. His salary upon the council's contingencies was 288*l.* per annum; and when Cromwell abolished the council, he appointed him his private Latin secretary, in the duties of which he was assisted by Andrew Marvell, the poet, whom he had himself urgently recommended for the situation. It has been objected to this passage in the life of Milton, that

he betrayed his faith to the people in accepting office under the protector; that he had all throughout advocated a republic; and that, in becoming accessory to Cromwell's assumption of power in his own hands, he violated the principles he professed. In all cases of this kind, it is essential to the interests of truth that we should extend our views beyond general definitions, and embrace a comprehensive survey, not merely of great events, but of all the minor circumstances flowing into them, and ebbing round them. Milton never advocated any special form of government; and whenever his arguments seemed to take the particular direction of a republic, it was not for the sake of a republic, but for the sake of the public liberties which were presumed to be included in that shape of administration. Of all the writers of that age, Milton is the most distinct in this emphatic purpose—that it is the recognition of the security of the rights of the people for which he struggles. That a democracy, in the fullest sense of that term, would have best pleased Milton, could it have been guaranteed, cannot be doubted: but when he saw, after the death of the king, that the parliament attempted to revive in other modes, tyrannies as tremendous as those which it had annihilated; and that the proceedings of Cromwell in the formation of a protectorate, without proposing to transmit its powers in his family, would have the effect of cementing the interests of the state, which the arbitrary rule of the parliament threatened to subvert; it can hardly be doubted that he discerned in Cromwell's policy the only alternative that remained for the salvation of the country. Had the parliament been suffered to proceed much farther in its ruinous course, anarchy must have ensued, and the fruits of the civil war would have perished as they were expanding into maturity. Milton saw that the choice lay between Cromwell—who was establishing, with great wisdom, the foundations of a more effectual representation of the people—and the Stuarts, who were impatient for another experiment of despotism, for which the folly of the par-

liament was obviously preparing the way. Milton decided promptly; and a clear examination of the results will show that he decided rightly.

Milton and Cromwell, it is said, were never intimate. Milton was employed by the protector; but there was no private confidence between them. Wherever this circumstance is alluded to, it is accompanied with a vague insinuation that Cromwell did not like to trust Milton; which is, of course, assumed as something to the disadvantage of the latter. Now, as it appears to be rather unreasonable that Cromwell should have chosen, for his private secretary, a man he did not like to trust, this construction is fairly open to objection. We have already seen, in a preceding memoir in this volume, that Cromwell admitted Waller to a most familiar footing—Waller, who had plotted for the return of the king, and who escaped death at the hands of the parliament by a dishonourable betrayal of his associates. Cromwell could scarcely be supposed to trust a man of this decription, yet he was intimate with Waller. To what circumstance, then, are we to refer the distance that was maintained betwen Cromwell and his Latin secretary? To Milton's greatness, which was superior to the trusts of princes. Cromwell held no rank in Milton's estimation, but that to which his pre-eminent merits entitled him. He honoured and reverenced his transcendent abilities, his promptitude in action, his sagacity, his love of country: but he paid no court to kings. His admiration of Cromwell was admiration of the man, and depended upon the continued exercise of the qualities which produced it: it was not the slavish admiration of a sceptre, which is the same under all aspects—except adversity. Cromwell was too subtle an observer of human nature to let this intrepid and honest patriot approach too close; he desired, prudently, to preserve his good opinion; and seems to have thought that the best way was to suffer as little diminution in private, as their relative positions would allow, of that reputation which he held in public. He could not afford to be at his

ease before Milton, who was sincere upon all those points in which Cromwell only affected to acquiesce for the furtherance of his ends.*

About the time when Milton's blindness had set in, 1652, he removed from Scotland Yard to a garden house in Petty France, Westminster, communicating with St. James's Park; and here his wife died of a consumption, shortly after the birth of her fourth child, leaving three daughters behind.† He did not, however, long continue a widower. In 1655 he married again, Catherine, the daughter of captain Woodcock, of Hackney, a lady to whom he appears to have been affectionately attached; but who unhappily died within a year after their marriage, and was followed to the grave by her infant daughter.‡

"Blossom and bough were withered with one blight."

On the 17th of April, 1655, an order was issued to reduce his salary from 288*l.*, formerly charged on the council's contingencies, to the sum of 150*l.* per annum, to be paid to him during his life out of his highness's exchequer. Upon this allowance he retired from office;

* In his habits, Milton was confessedly reserved. He was slow and choice in the extension of his friendships His closest and most constant friends were persons of great private worth, of sterling integrity, but who derive their lustre from their association with him. He did not select men because they were high in station or in the world's applause. Aubrey says that Milton's widow told him that Hobbes was not one of his acquaintance; that her husband did not like him at all, but acknowledged him to be a man of great parts, and a learned man

† Milton always registered the births of his children in a family Bible. Birch gives the following entries as appearing in Milton's hand-writing :— "Anne, my daughter, was born July 29., about half an hour after six in the morning, 1646 Mary, my daughter, was born on Wednesday, October 25th, on the fast day, in the morning about six of the clock, 1648 My son John was born on Saturday, March 16th, about half an hour past nine at night, 1650. My daughter Deborah was born the 2d of May, being Sunday, somewhat before three of the clock in the morning, 1652."

‡ Kennet, in a note upon Wood's Memoir of Milton in the "Fasti," gives us a tradition about the funeral of the lady, that, whether it be authentic or not, is at least very curious. His words are,—"Mr. Milton then lived in a new house in Petty France, where Mr. Harvey, son of Dr. Harvey, of Petty France, Westminster, told me, Nov. 14. 1730, that, old Mr. Lounds assured him that when Mr. Milton buried his wife, he had the coffin shut down with 12 several locks that had 12 several keys, and that he gave the keys to 12 several friends, and desired the coffin might not be open'd till they all met together."

but although he ceased to execute the regular duties of Latin secretary, he still occasionally contributed some valuable official documents. The papers drawn up by him during the term of his secretaryship are numerous, and not a few of them upon subjects of great difficulty. The most important and critical of these compositions is the protector's manifesto, known to have been composed by Milton, containing an exposition of the reasons by which he was influenced in the declaration of the war against Spain.

On his retirement from official life, which we can hardly imagine to have been at any time quite suited to his tastes, he resumed those early studies which the troubles of the time had interrupted, but never extinguished in his thoughts. He completed his "History of England to the Conquest," and made a considerable advance in the compilation of a Latin dictionary. The labours of a blind man upon history are, perhaps, intelligible; we can comprehend the process by which, tracing the progress of events through the books of others, he gradually accumulates authorities, compares, collates, and decides: but the process of collecting materials for a dictionary involves such endless references, such close and rigid attention to details which cannot be followed by other eyes, such frequent recurrence to the same points, and such indefatigable perseverance,—a quality which few persons exhibit in their own undertakings, and which might be despaired of in a deputy,—that it seems an impracticable task for an individual so circumstanced. Yet Philips assures us that the project of this "Thesaurus" was prosecuted by Milton almost to his dying day, but the papers were so discomposed, and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the press. The whole collection towards the dictionary ultimately accomplished by Milton, reached to three folios; and it is stated by Wood, that they came into the hands of Philips, who is believed to have used them in the Cambridge Dictionary published in quarto in 1693, upon which he is supposed, with several others, to have been employed. The three

MS. folios, collected and digested by Milton into alphabetical order, are stated, in the preface to that work, to have been placed at the disposal of the editors.

But the composition which chiefly engrossed Milton's meditations, was the epic poem which had filled the whole morning of his life like a glorious vision of the future, and which, now that he was advancing far into that future, began to take a more tangible and distinct shape. It was not until he was completely released from the occupations of office, and the still greater encumbrances of political controversy, that he determined upon the subject of this long meditated work. He had formerly thought of Arthur and the Round Table, and the chivalry of knighthood; but that was at a time when his imagination had been recently excited by the enchantments of Spenser and the picturesque romances of Italian poetry. Time and severer contemplation had gradually banished those brilliant themes from his mind, to make room for a subject of more solemn import, demanding graver and loftier powers, and embracing the whole scope of his learning, his wisdom, and his genius. The external world was closed upon him, and his soul, tempered and elevated by devotion, looked up to Heaven. The muse he invoked was the Spirit of Divine Truth; and the subject he chose was "Paradise Lost." The design surpassed in grandeur all the projects that had ever been attempted before in poetry. The siege of Troy, the wanderings of Ulysses, the speculations of the Inferno, were immeasurably beneath it in sublimity of conception; and with this consciousness of the majesty of his plan, it is not surprising that he should have long hesitated before he resolved, and that numerous shapes and modes of treatment should have presented themselves to him on his progress to the final settlement of his intentions. Amongst the MSS. at Cambridge, some sketches are preserved, by which it is shown that at one period it was his intention to have written it in the form of a tragedy on morality.*

* The interest attached to the first draft of a great work, in which the

But the uneasy circumstances of the country did not allow him to dedicate his whole thoughts to poetry. In

inchoate thought, as it originally presented itself to the mind, is deposited, will render the insertion of these sketches acceptable in this place. Dr. Birch was the first person to draw attention to them, and they have subsequently been reprinted in some of the biographies. They are mere rudiments, but, like the bold outlines of a master hand, are full of power. The following plan seems to have been the first chosen.

The Persons.	*The Persons.*
Michael.	Moses.
Chorus of Angels.	Divine Justice, Wisdom, Heavenly Love.
Heavenly Love.	The Evening Star, Hesperus.
Lucifer.	Chorus of Angels.
Adam, Eve, } with the Serpent.	Adam.
Conscience.	Eve.
Death.	Conscience,
Labour, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, with others, } Mutes.	Labour, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, } Mutes.
Faith.	Death,
Hope.	Faith.
Charity.	Hope
	Charity.

PARADISE LOST.

The Persons.

Moses,—recounting how he assumed his true body; that it corrupts not, because it is with God in the Mount; declares the like of Enoch and Elijah; beside the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds, preserve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the sight of God; tells they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence by reason of their sin.

Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, } debating what should become of man if he fall.

Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the Creation.

ACT II.

Heavenly Love
Evening Star.
Chorus sing the marriage song, and describe Paradise.

ACT III.

Lucifer contrives Adam's ruin.
Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

ACT IV.

Adam, Eve, } fallen.
Conscience cites them to God's examination.
Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has lost.

1658, he edited a manuscript of sir Walter Raleigh, entitled "The Cabinet Council." "A Treatise of the Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases," which he had written during the sittings of the council upon some causes of that description (in which he took a freer tone than he had done of late respecting the rights of the people, wrung from him by the equivocal proceed-

ACT V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.
———— presented by an Angel with Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Pestilence, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, } Mutes.
To whom he gives their names: likewise Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.
Faith, Hope, Charity, } comfort and instruct him.
Chorus briefly concludes.

The next sketch, as Dr. Johnson observes, appears to have attained more maturity Yet it would seem, that as the poet was advancing towards a fuller development of his subject, he was more perplexed than before about the title of the work. Although he had previously decided upon Paradise Lost,—which, at least, has the advantage of being both simple and general,—in the following outline, or argument, he adopts a title which is limited in application, and obscure in reference to the entire scope of the poem:—

ADAM UNPARADISED.

The Angel Gabriel, either descending or entering; showing, since this globe was created, his frequency as much on earth as in heaven; describes Paradise. Next, the Chorus, showing the reason of his coming to keep watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command of God; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The Angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears; after his overthrow, bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs; whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in heaven, against him and his accomplices: as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and exulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience in a shape accuses him; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him In the mean while, the Chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonisheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The Angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs: at last appears Mercy; comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught.

ings of the protectorate), drew him once more into the vortex. The old republican party — who had regarded with suspicion his attachment to Cromwell — now looked to him again for the deliverance of the country. One of them wrote to him in these terms: — "I confess I have (even in my privacy in the country) oft had thoughts of you, and that with much respect, for your friendship to truth in your early years and in bad times. But I was uncertain whether your relation to the court (though I think a commonwealth was more friendly to you than a court) had not clouded your former light: but your last book resolved that doubt." Thus stimulated, Milton resumed his attack on the church in a furious but powerful essay, entitled "Considerations on the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church." But it was too late. The days of the interregnum were about to close. The death of Cromwell threw the nation into a state of anarchy, which his successor, the amiable but infirm Richard Cromwell, was unable to quell. At length the dissensions were brought to a crisis in October, 1659, by the violent conduct of the army in the dissolution of the parliament.* Milton knew that nothing short of vigorous decision could now prevent the return of the Stuarts, and he put forward his whole strength in two brief treatises, pregnant with matter, upon the ruptures of the commonwealth and the means of remedying them. In one of these he suggested the plan of a popular government to be put into immediate practice. These were followed by a still more energetic appeal, called "Easy way to establish a free Commonwealth, &c." But the king's party were now fast gaining upon the puritans, who, divided amongst themselves, were utterly unable to maintain their ground. A year or two before, no man in England would have ventured to proclaim a monarchy in print: but upon this occasion

* Milton received his stipend from the government up to this time. The last state warrant to pay him and Andrew Marvell their respective incomes is dated 25th October, 1659. Shortly after this the office was sequestrated.

— so near was the restoration at hand — that Milton's "Easy way to establish a free Commonwealth," instead of invoking the cry "To your tents, O Israel!" was burlesqued in a pamphlet of coarse and ribald humour, in which his doctrines of liberty were set at nought by a mocking spirit confident of the approaching triumph. In addition to this piece of ridicule, Milton was seriously assailed in a work maintaining the king's title, and dedicated to "Charles 2nd, true, hereditary king." The zeal of the royalists now exhibited itself every day in bolder movements. Dr. Griffiths, of Mercer's chapel, published a sermon he had preached to his congregation, called "The Fear of God and the King," in which he re-asserted the divine right of the sovereign; and Milton, omitting no opportunity of endeavouring, as long as he could, to defend his cause, immediately issued "Brief Notes" upon the discourse. Roger L'Estrange answered Milton's notes in a piece which he had the bad taste to call "No Blind Guides."

The struggle was hopeless. Milton felt that the whole fabric of government, which the genius of Cromwell had commenced, and which, left thus imperfect, was productive of more evil than good, was rapidly crumbling into dust. The riotous shouts of the licentious mob of royalists across the waters of the Channel, were echoed by their exulting confederates at home. It was no time for parley with his broken hopes. He had beheld the triumph and establishment of his principles—he had seen England rescued from the oppressions of a race whose blood seemed to run mad with the vilest passions; — and he was now destined to survive the downfall of all his expectations, and to witness the resumption of power by a prince who, in addition to his father's insincerity, inherited the profligacy of his mother. There was no choice left open. He fought against the tide as long as he could, and when it was about to overwhelm him, he gave way. The arrival of the king placed him in a situation of imminent personal danger. Had he been discovered,

he must have died on the scaffold with Vane and his associates. But he sought refuge in Bartholomew Close, with a friend (whose name has not descended to posterity, to be for ever repeated with honour), and escaped the vigilance of his enemies.

Milton was too distinguished an antagonist of royalty, not to excite the particular vengeance of the authorities. Accordingly no pains were spared to discover his retreat; and such were the apprehensions of his friends, that they contrived a mock funeral for the sake of having it believed that he was dead. Failing in their efforts to trace him to his concealment, a royal order was issued *, setting forth that he had so obscured

* The following is a literal copy of the order. It shows the spirit in which Milton was persecuted, and is indispensable as a documentary refutation of the amiable misrepresentation which Johnson gives of the conduct of the royalists to their blind, illustrious antagonist. It would almost seem from Johnson's statement, that they did not contemplate any measures of severity towards Milton. He says that it is not even "certain that Milton's life ever was in danger." Let this state paper determine.

"By the King

"A Proclamation,

"For calling in and suppressing of two books written by John Milton; the one entituled, Johannis Miltoni Angli pro Populo Anglicano Defensio, contra Claudii Anonymi, alias Salmasii, Defensionem Regiam; and the other in answer to a book entituled, The Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings. And also a book entituled, The Ostructors of Justice, written by John Goodwin.

"Charles R.

"Whereas, John Milton, late of Westminster, in the county of Middlesex, hath published in print two several books, the one entituled, Johannis Miltoni Angli pro Populo Anglicano Defensio, contra Claudii Anonymi, alias Salmasii, Defensionem Regiam. And the other in answer to a book entituled, The Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings. In both of which are contained sundry treasonable passages against us and our government, and most impious endeavours to justify the most horrid and unnatural murder of our late dear father of glorious memory.

"And whereas, John Goodwin, late of Coleman Street, London, Clerk, hath also published in print, a book entituled, The Ostructors of Justice, written in Defence of his said late Majesty [This is obviously a mistake in the transcript of the document. Goodwin's book was written *against* his late majesty.] And whereas the said John Milton and John Goodwin are both fled, or *so obscure themselves* that no *endeavour* used for their apprehension can take effect, whereby they might be brought to legal tryal, and *deservedly receive condign punishment* for their treasons and offences.

"Now, to the end that our good subjects may not be corrupted in their judgments, with such wicked and traiterous principles, as are dispersed and scattered throughout the before-mentioned books, We, upon the motion of the commons in parliament now assembled, do hereby strictly charge and command all and every person and persons whatsoever, who live in any city, burrough, or town incorporate, within this our kingdom of England, the dominion of Wales, and town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, in whose hands any of these books are, or hereafter shall be, that they, upon

himself as to evade the just punishment of his offences, and ordering his "Iconoclastes," and his "Defensio pro Populo Anglicano," to be burned by the hands of the common hangman; a ceremony which was duly performed on the 27th of August. No doubt they would have burned Milton into the bargain if they could; the attorney-general was ordered to prosecute him, but could not find him; and then came the Act of Oblivion, which, as it extended to every body but those who were personally concerned in the death of the king, redeemed the poet from his bondage. But it is certain that even after this he was not safe. One of his biographers * says that he lived in perpetual terror of

pain of our high displeasure, and the consequence thereof, do forthwith, upon publication of this our command, or within ten days immediately following, deliver or cause the same to be delivered, to the mayor, bailiffs, or other chief officer or magistrate, in any one of the said cities, burroughs, or towns incorporate, where such person or persons do live, or if living out of any city, burrough, or town incorporate, then to the next justice of peace adjoining to his or their dwelling, or place of abode; or if living in either of our universities, then to the vice-chancellor of that university where he or they do reside. And in default of any such voluntary delivery, which We do expect in observance of this our command, That then, and after the time limited, expired, the said chief magistrates of all and every the said cities, burroughs, or towns incorporate, the justices of the peace in their several counties, and the vice-chancellors of our said universities respectively, are hereby commanded to seize and take, all and every the books aforesaid, in whose hands or possession soever they shall be found, and certify the names of the offenders to our privy council.

"And we do hereby give special charge and command to the said chief magistrates, justices of the peace and chancellors respectively, that they cause the said books which shall be so brought unto any of their hands, or seized or taken as aforesaid, by virtue of this our proclamation, to be delivered to the respective sheriffs are hereby also required, in time of holding any such assizes, to cause the same to be publickly burnt by the hand of the common hangman.

"And we do further straightly charge and command, that no man hereafter presume to print, sell, or disperse any of the aforesaid books, upon pain of our heavy displeasure, and of such further punishment, as for their presumption in that behalf, may any way be inflicted upon them by the laws of this realm.

(Given at Our Court at Whitehall the 13th day of August in the twelfth year of Our Reign, 1660.)"

Previously to the issue of this proclamation, the house of commons, on the 16th of June, came to a resolution that the king be moved to call in Milton's two books above named, and that the attorney-general be instructed to proceed against him and Goodwin by indictment or otherwise. On the 27th of June, an order in council appeared, reciting this resolution, and, after setting forth that the parties were not to be found, directs a proclamation for calling in the books, which was issued accordingly: and which was followed by a second proclamation, dated, as above, 13th of August. Yet Dr. Johnson says that Milton was, perhaps, not very diligently pursued, and that it is not certain he was ever in danger.

* Richardson.

being assassinated, which, considering that some of his friends fell by treachery of that kind, is not very surprising.

Notwithstanding that the Act of Oblivion included him, there appears to have been some difficulty about procuring his exemption from punishment of some sort. Subsequently to the date of that act, he was taken into custody by a serjeant-at-arms, *because* the attorney-general was not discharged of the order to prosecute him. But *why* the attorney-general was not discharged of the order after it had ceased to be valid, or *why*, supposing the order still to hold good, Milton was taken into custody under it by the serjeant-at-arms of the house of commons, are points that have never been explained; and which none of the biographers of Milton, who possessed the means of inquiring into them, seem to have considered worth investigation. Whatever may have been the pretext for this proceeding, one fact is ascertained beyond all doubt — that, although Milton was included in the Act of Oblivion, he did not reap its advantages until weighty intercession was made on his behalf in parliament and at court. When he was in the custody of the serjeant-at-arms, the crown ordered that he should be discharged on payment of the fees. This occurred on Saturday, the 15th of December, 1660. On the following Monday, he having been in the interim in the hands of the most extortionate officer in the realm, a complaint was made to the house, that the serjeant had demanded excessive fees; whereupon Milton and the serjeant were ordered before the committee of privileges, for the determination of the amount that ought to be paid. The result is not known; but all the accounts agree that Milton was indebted to some friends in parliament — secretary Morris and sir Thomas Clarges are particularly named — for being included in the indemnity, and perhaps for being so quietly released from the hands of the serjeant. According to another story, he owed his safety to D'Avenant, whose life he had been the means of saving on a former occasion, during

the civil war, and who availed himself of that perilous moment to return the obligation. The first part of the story is mentioned by Wood, who had it from Aubrey; and the rest is added by Richardson, who had it from Pope, who had it from Betterton, who is supposed to have had it from D'Avenant himself. The authority upon which it rests, is not merely that of a tradition transmitted through several hands; for Wood, who lived close to the time, heard at least one half of the anecdote. It is likely, therefore, to have some foundation in truth; and it is one of those instances of generosity and gratitude, which every body would be glad to be enabled to believe. But why was all this interest necessary to save Milton, unless the government contemplated severe measures towards him? We must either reject the anecdotes about the zeal of his friends and the relenting goodness of the king, or we must believe that Milton was specially marked out for the vengeance of the court. That great difficulties impeded his pardon, he tells us himself in his Familiar Epistles. What, then, was the Act of Oblivion? Must we, indeed, conclude that it was a roll of waste paper like the Petition of Rights? It was fortunate for the fame of Charles II., that there were some about him, who had influence enough to obtain for Milton the benefit of an instrument of grace from which he could not have been excluded except by a breach of public faith. To them, and not to the king, the world is indebted for "Paradise Lost."

When probability is greatly outraged in the turn of a narrative, it is generally found that some circumstance, more improbable than all the rest, is drawn in to wind up the whole, so as to diminish, by its extreme incredibility, the unlikelihood of what has gone before. Thus, after being told, in direct contradiction to the steps that were taken against Milton, and the difficulty he experienced in procuring his pardon, that the king exhibited "tenderness" to him,— mercy (I quote Dr. Johnson), which wanted "no recommendation of *elegance*," — it is added, that Milton was offered by king Charles the

restitution of his office of Latin secretary, and that he declined it. At this period he was married for the third time; and when his wife pressed him to accept the appointment, he is said to have answered, "You, like other women, want to ride in your coach; my wish is to live and die an honest man." The answer would have become him, and has a rugged integrity in it that agrees with the tone of his character. But the anecdote is altogether improbable. The dark republican would have been a perpetual reproach to their gaieties at Whitehall. It is more likely that Milton refused the secretaryship, than that he was tempted by the offer.

Freedom was all Milton now possessed. To him it was a great possession; but it was all that was left to him of a life of strenuous exertion and unstained virtue. A small estate he had inherited from his father, was gone. He had lent it upon the public faith, in the time when such proofs of zeal were valuable. He earnestly pressed his suit to have it restored before the breaking up of the commonwealth, but in vain. Others had made fortunes of their opportunities, and enriched their creatures: Milton went out of office poorer than he entered it. During his secretaryship he saved 2000*l.*, for he was a man of frugal, but not penurious, habits, and lodged it in the excise; but that bank failing at the restoration, he lost the whole.* He had an estate, also, of 60*l.* per annum in Westminster; but this, too, went at the restoration, being taken from him by the dean and chapter, to whom it had formerly belonged. In addition to these calamities, Philips tells us that he also lost, by the failure of securities, a considerable sum of money he had lent at interest; so that his pecuniary resources at this time must have been considerably reduced, if they were not altogether annihilated.† Perhaps these accumulated

* Wood — Fasti.

† The only property that appears to have remained to Milton, was the house in Bread Street, where he was born, which could not have yielded him much. But, whatever it was worth, he was destined to lose even that. It was burnt in the fire of London in 1666. Foreigners, coming to this country, used to visit it out of pure devotion.

misfortunes may have led to the report, which is mentioned only by one writer*, that, after the return of the royal family, he set up a school at or near Greenwich; which would seem to be in some manner corroborated by his publication, in 1661, of a little book entitled "Accidence commenced Grammar," which shows at least that he had directed his attention once more to the subject of education. But the report wants confirmation. He is next traced to Holborn, near Red Lion Fields; from whence he removed to a house in Jewin Street, near Aldersgate—where, finding himself more desolate than ever in his blindness, he commissioned his friend Dr. Paget to choose a third wife for him, and the doctor selected a relative of his own, Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. Minshull, a gentleman of Cheshire.† To this lady Milton was married in 1664.

It has been remarked by almost all Milton's biographers, that his three wives were selected from the state of maidenhood, as if there were something remarkable in the fact. Dr. Johnson says, that Milton declared he thought it indelicate to be a second husband; and Todd contrasts with Milton's three marriages, the choice of Sheffield duke of Buckingham, who married three widows; upon which the Rev. Mr. Mitford observes, that, from an entire ignorance on these subjects, the inference the learned biographers would draw from their respective choices is to him unknown. He adds, that "Sheffield was probably looking out for a splendid jointure; and Milton for a gentle, virtuous, and attached companion." The speculation is hardly tangible enough to reward so much ingenuity. It is not at all improbable that Milton never thought of the matter, and that his three marriages were as much the result of chance as design.

Shortly after his marriage, Milton changed his residence again, and lodged with Millington, a book auctioneer, who is described to have been a man of con-

* Gildon, in the Continuation of Langbaine's Dramatic Poets.
† Philips.

siderable talents. Millington used to conduct his blind friend through the streets, and seems to have been zealous in his attendance upon him. Here Elwood, the quaker, was introduced to him by Dr. Paget, and waited upon him every afternoon, except Sunday, to read Latin, — an office which he undertook with a view to his own improvement. Milton's ear was so accurate that he could always detect the passages Elwood did not understand, by the manner in which he read them.

From Millington's house, Milton removed to a small house in Artillery Walk, leading to Bunhill Fields, which had but one room on each floor *, as it appeared to a gentleman who visited him, and who found him up one pair of stairs, in a chamber hung with rusty green, sitting in an elbow chair, dressed neatly in black, looking pale but not cadaverous, with gout chalked in his hands and fingers; if it were not for the pain of which, Milton said, "his blindness would be tolerable." His general dress at home used to be a grey coarse cloth coat, in which, in the summer weather, he would sit at the door to enjoy the air; and in that way, as also in his room, he would receive the visits of persons of distinction and men of letters. † "I cannot but remark," observes Dr. Johnson, "a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned; as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place, that he honoured by his presence." This is gracefully said; and Dr. Johnson says so few graceful things of Milton, that it is all the more remarkable.

It is not known with certainty when Milton commenced his "Paradise Lost;" but it was in the Artillery Walk — where he resided longer than he had done any where else — that he completed it. With the exception of a visit to Chalfont, in Buckinghamshire, where Milton spent some months with his friend Elwood while the plague was raging in London, he continued to live in

* This account, and what follows, was derived by Richardson from Dr. Wright, "an ancient clergyman in Dorsetshire."
† Richardson.

this small house for the remainder of his life. The gout seems to have made him a close prisoner; but his confinement, however otherwise it might have affected him, was, at least favourable to the continuous prosecution of his great undertaking. It is supposed that he commenced about two years before the king came in, and brought the poem to a conclusion about three years after the restoration; so that he was altogether five years engaged upon it.* But during that time there were regular intervals of repose, when his imagination refused to obey his demands. Philip informs us, that during the several years occupied in the composition of the "Paradise Lost," he had the perusal of it from time to time in small parcels of twenty or thirty verses (which generally wanted correction, being written by any hand that chanced to be near); and that, not having received any for a whole summer, he inquired of Milton the reason, and was answered that "his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times, was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much: so that, in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent half his time therein." The censor who finds fault with Milton for all things, objects even to this vicissitude, which he could not control. "This dependence of the soul upon the seasons," says Dr. Johnson, "these temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination." It is easier to ridicule a weakness that is common, in some form, more or less to all men, than to vanquish it. No man is at all times able to accomplish the same kind and degree of mental labour. The seasons have their influences over moral and animal as well as vegetable nature; and although necessity compels us to resist them, it will not be denied that we are not always

* Capel Lofft is of opinion that Milton was occupied for nine years on "Paradise Lost:" and there are other conjectures which are scarcely worth noticing. The period adopted in the text appears to be the most probable of them all, and is best sustained by authority.

equally successful. A multitude of instances might be cited, to show that almost all distinguished writers — especially those who have excelled in invention — have been similarly subjected to "ebbs and flows of intellect." But every body is familiar with a fact which nobody but Dr. Johnson would have derided; and which, probably, even he would have passed over unnoticed, but that it particularly concerned Milton!

The perpetual difficulties of the composition, in Milton's circumstances, were such as must have required the exercise of incredible patience. Dependent often upon accident for an amanuensis, he was compelled to avail himself of any help of that kind that offered, whenever he could. Sometimes the tide of imagination was suffered to flow in vain; and at other times he was forced to recall it as well as he might, and to prosecute his task under many incidental disadvantages. He had not the choice of felicitous moments to resume his labours; he could not always avail himself of times when he was free from pain, when fancy happened to be in a rich mood, or when fresh suggestions occurred for the remodelling and improving previous passages. He was obliged to dictate when he could get any body to write. These considerations assist us to a closer view of the pressure of his toils; and unfold to us, perhaps, the source of those occasional discrepancies in the rhythm and language which have from time to time employed the ingenuity of the small critics. Bishop Newton justly observes, that considering the impediments against which Milton had to contend —"his uneasiness at the public affairs and his own, his age and infirmities, his not being now in circumstances to maintain an amanuensis, but obliged to make use of any hand that came next, to write his verses as he made them,—it is really wonderful that he should have the spirit to undertake such a work, and much more that he should ever bring it to perfection." Milton complains of the embarrassments attending his mode of writing, in a letter to his friend Peter Heimbach. He says, "in ending my letter, let me obtain

from you this favour, — that if you find any part of it incorrectly written, and without stops, you will impute it to the boy who writes for me, who is utterly ignorant of Latin, and to whom I am forced (wretchedly enough) to repeat every single letter that I dictate."*

Elwood says, that Milton showed him the MS. of "Paradise Lost" in 1665; but it may be doubted whether the poem was then quite finished, as it was not published until 1667. Or it may have lain upon Milton's hands, as the licenser † opposed its publication at first, startled by the luxuriance of its images.‡ Permission, however, was at last granted; and Milton sold his copyright to Simmons, the publisher. The agreement, elaborately drawn up, covenanted an immediate payment of 5*l*, and 5*l*. were to be paid when the first edition of 1300 copies should be sold. Five pounds were also to be paid upon the sale of the second and third editions of the same number of copies.§ Milton received the first 5*l*., and lived to receive the second, at the end of the first edition: and in eleven years afterwards, in 1680, his widow, for a consideration of 8*l*., assigned over to the bookseller her whole interest in the work. The entire sum, therefore, which Milton received for "Paradise Lost," was 10*l*.; to which adding the amount received by his widow, makes a sum total of 18*l*. for the greatest work of poetry in the English language! Perhaps the most extraordinary event, next to this, in the commercial annals of literature, is the sale of the romance of "Woodstock," for which sir Walter Scott received 8000*l*.

* Hayley's translation.

† The office of licenser, abolished by Cromwell, was restored by act of parliament in 1662.

‡ It is mentioned that one of his objections was to the simile of the sun eclipsed, in the first book.

§ This agreement, which for a century and a half had eluded the anxious research of the curious, was at length recovered through the representatives of Tonson; and is now, I believe, in the possession of Mr. Pickering There are also extant in other hands the receipt for the second five pounds, signed by Milton; the third receipt, signed by his widow; and her final discharge in full. A solicitor in our days would receive more for drawing up the contract for the copyright, than Milton received for "Paradise Lost."

The first edition of the poem had a slow and struggling sale. So indifferently was it received, that the title-page was changed no less than four times, with the imprint of different booksellers, to force the work into the market.* In the first copy the work was issued without arguments, which were supplied in the third, with an address from the printer to the reader, and the description of "the verse." Several trifling amendments were made at the press during these frequent re-issues; none of which, however, amounted to much more than changes in the punctuation, and a few verbal alterations. The history of the rest of the editions may be briefly recited. A second edition was published in 1674, revised by the author, in twelve books; the seventh and tenth books, which were disproportionately long before, being divided into two each. In this edition appeared, for the first time, the commendatory verses of Barrow and Marvell. A third edition was issued in 1678,—four years after Milton's death,—but announced, like the former, to have received revision and augmentation at the hands of the author. Simmons parted with his copyright, for 25*l.*, to Brabazon Aylmer, who sold the half of it to Jacob Tonson in 1683, and the remainder at a large price in 1690. It is not known what sum Tonson gave for it, but it is certain that he realised a considerable profit. Addison, Philips, and others, were one evening at his house, when a discussion arose about blank verse, which Addison was in the humour to depreciate. At last a gentleman present ended the dispute by asking Jacob what poem he ever got the most by? Jacob immediately named "Paradise Lost." †

In two years, thirteen thousand copies were sold—

* The original title, in a small quarto, was as follows:—"Paradise Lost, a Poem, written in Ten Books, by John Milton. Licensed and Entred according to Order. London: Printed, and to be sold by Peter Parker, under Creed Church, near Aldgate; and by Robert Boulter, at the Turk's Head in Bishopsgate Street; and Matthias Walker, under St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street." The book was in 342 pages, and sold for 3 shillings. Twice in 1668, and again twice in 1669, new title-pages were adopted, with the names of different venders.

† Spence's Anecdotes.

but in the succeeding nine years, only one thousand more. This was a tardy recognition of the merits of the work; but succeeding generations have amply atoned for contemporary indifference. No means exist of estimating the number of editions that have been printed of "Paradise Lost" since the revolution; but it may be stated without much risk, that in some shape, cheap or costly, it has found its way, at one time or another, into almost every house in the kingdom.

Richardson tells a story about sir John Denham running into the house of commons with a sheet of the "Paradise Lost" in his hand, wet from the press, and, upon being asked what it was, replying that it was "part of the noblest poem that was ever written in any age or language." The anecdote, if it were true, would reflect infinite credit on Denham's discernment, in forming so correct an opinion from a single sheet, which he evidently had not had time to examine, since it was "wet from the press;" but unluckily sir John was not a member of the house, and the story, therefore, is defective in a main particular. To be sure, he might have said the same thing any where else; but nobody heard him.

The next publication that appeared from the pen of Milton was his "History of England." It was issued in 1670, but not until the licenser had cut out several pages that offended him. These have, however, been subsequently restored.

Milton prosecuted his studies all this period with undiminished earnestness. He never seemed to be conscious of fatigue; and, having concluded the vast undertaking he had looked forward to throughout his whole life, it might be supposed he would now rest for a season from his tasks. But his poem was no sooner finished, than he resumed his history; and that was hardly published, than it was followed by the "Paradise Regained," and "Sampson Agonistes." The former work was written on the accidental suggestion of Elwood the quaker. "You put it into my head," said Milton, "by the questions you

put to me at Chalfont, which otherwise I had not thought of." That Milton regarded this to be superior to the "Paradise Lost," and could not bear with patience to have the comparison made, is one of those inexplicable mistakes which authors commit only in reference to their own works, and about which it would be in vain to argue. In structure and in treatment the "Paradise Lost" is immeasurably grander than the "Paradise Regained:" and it is difficult to comprehend the process by which Milton could have deceived himself into a notion which the whole world agree in considering to be erroneous. In the following year (1672), he published "Ars Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami Methodum concinnata." Such were the wonderful efforts of the blind old man to fill his remaining years with labours of utility. "By the graciousness of God," he says in one of his private letters, "who had prepared for me a safe retreat in the country, I am still alive and well; and, I trust, not utterly an unprofitable servant, whatever duty in life there yet remains for me to fulfil."

The expedient to which he had recourse in the absence of regular assistance in reading, was to make his two younger daughters (the eldest was excused on account of infirm health and difficulty in utterance) read to him in the various languages of the numerous books to which, in the course of his studies, he had occasion. These books embraced the Hebrew, and, I think, says Philips, the Syriac, the Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French, not one of which his daughters were acquainted with; but he instructed them to pronounce the words with sufficient correctness to enable him to understand them, although the intonation of the sentences must have been to him as perplexing and tantalising, as the whole task was irksome and dreary to them. By this severe and despairing labour, it is not surprising they should at last have become utterly fatigued: they endured it with becoming patience for a long time, and then began to murmur, and perhaps at last to neglect their duty altogether. Milton complains

of their ingratitude; and it is known that for the last four or five years of his life they lived apart from him. It is possible that he may have exacted too much from them — not suspecting that studies which were so attractive and absorbing to him, were to them the most melancholy drudgery. Finding that they filled his household with rebellion, he sent them out to learn embroidery in gold and silver. "One tongue," he used to say to them, "is enough for a woman." Of this unkindness of his daughters to him, there seems to be no doubt; although there might have been provocation in the secluded habits of their father, and the presence of a step-mother. A story has crept into the biographies, upon the authority of a servant, that they sold his library by stealth during his life-time; but the statement is highly improbable. Milton latterly "contracted his library," says Toland, "both because the heirs he left could not make a right use of it, and that he thought he might sell it more to their advantage than they could be able to do themselves." He sold his books before his death, to increase the small legacy he bequeathed to his wife.

The book on Logic was succeeded, in 1673, by a polemical tract entitled "A Treatise of True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration, and what best Means may be used against the Growth of Popery." In this publication there is nothing very remarkable, except its uncompromising hatred of popery. It is to be lamented that a man who was so bold an advocate for freedom, should have damaged the purity of his principles by maintaining the virtue of persecution against the papists, because they differed from him on points of religious belief. He would have committed no inconsistency in maintaining that the papists were wrong, which he had a right to do in vindication of his own opinions; but when he denounces their errors as the "worst of superstitions, and the heaviest of God's judgments," he violates the fundamental doctrine—liberty of conscience—for which he had all along been contending. Speak-

ing of this treatise, Dr. Johnson says that Milton's "principle of toleration is agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, *whatever their opinions are,* profess to derive them from the sacred books. The papists appeal to other testimonies; and are, therefore, in his opinion, *not to be permitted the liberty of either public or private worship;* for though they plead conscience, we have no warrant," he says, "to regard conscience, which is not grounded in 'Scripture.'" The Rev. Mr. Mitford adopts those sentences, omitting the words marked in *italics,* and substituting the word *toleration* in the last sentence, for Johnson's more candid exposition of Milton's purpose, that the papists ought not to be permitted the liberty of either public or private worship. Toleration is a phrase more congenial to the present age, but the spirit is exactly the same. Milton, Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Mitford, then, are agreed that all men, whatever their opinions may be, ought to be *tolerated,* except the papists; and Mr. Mitford selects this treatise of Milton's as a proof of the "unimpeachable piety of the author." Into the doctrines of the church of Rome, which have drawn down this triple thunder, I have no desire to institute an inquiry · nor is it, indeed, necessary to the support of the only observation I have to make on the subject. Whatever the doctrines of the church of Rome may be (and, with a meek spirit, I may venture to say that there are some of them which, as it appears to me, the Romanists themselves can hardly surrender their reason up to), I hold this privilege to be paramount to all doctrinal controversies whatever,—the indefeasible right of all human beings to worship the Creator agreeably to their consciences. When Milton sacrificed this essential right of freemen to theological scruples, he surely fell into a greater heresy against his own creed of civil and religious liberty than the papists have forged against the Bible itself.

But we are invited to a more grateful topic,—the republication this year of Milton's Juvenile Poems, with

some additions both to the Latin and English pieces; and the omission of Lawes' dedication of "Comus" to the earl of Bridgewater, obviously because his lordship, who was still living, was a devoted royalist; and sir Henry Wotton's complimentary letter, the suppression of which is not so easily explained. To these poems, the tractate on Education was added.

In the following year (1674) he published his Latin Epistles — his familiar epistles — exquisite compositions, which reveal the character of his mind more truly than, perhaps, all the rest of his diversified productions. To these letters he added some ingenious and graceful academical exercises; uniting in this volume the earliest and the last of his works.

About the same time there appeared a translation of the Latin declaration of Poland in favour of John III., which has been attributed to him: but the authority is of no higher value than a conjecture raised upon the style.

The scene was now about to close upon the greatest of English poets, and one of the most accomplished scholars of his own or any other age. Severe paroxysms of gout had latterly broken up his strength; but he bore his sufferings with the calmness of a philosopher. He was even cheerful under these fits of pain, and would sometimes sing: and appears by his firmness to have so far subjugated the malady, that he prepared himself quietly to die, and made a deliberate distribution of his small property. He expired gently at his house in Artillery Walk, on the 8th of November, 1674; and was buried next to his father, in the chancel of St. Giles, Cripplegate. His funeral was numerously attended — the noble, the learned, and the poor assembling at his grave, to render the last honours to a man whose integrity extorted respect from his enemies, and whose genius commanded universal homage.

A common stone was placed on the spot where Milton was buried; which being removed a few years after his interment, left his grave without a memorial

to distinguish it from the surrounding hillocks. This neglect was repaired by Mr. Whitbread, who caused a marble bust, and a tablet inscribed to the poet's memory, to be placed in the middle aisle of the church. In Westminster Abbey, a monument was erected to his fame in 1737, by Mr. Benson. *

Milton's productions have been noticed in this biography, in the order in which they appeared, as far as any authentic information on the subject enables us at this distance of time to determine them. But, as he embarked so zealously in the controversies of the day, it may be reasonably doubted whether the catalogue is complete. If any tracts be lost, however, they are most likely to have been of temporary and fugitive interest; for it is not probable that any great work of so remarkable a man could have been permitted to perish, at least from the records of his life. This assumption is in some degree borne out by allusions, which we find in Toland and Aubrey, to a system of divinity which Milton was known to have drawn up, but which for nearly 160 years after his death could never be traced. The composition of this treatise was a matter of notoriety, although he never gave it to the press. Aubrey mentions the work, which he calls Milton's "Idea Theologiæ;" and says that it was deposited in the hands of Cyriac Skinner, a merchant's son, in the city; which statement was confirmed by Wood. But nothing further transpired concerning this precious MS., until it was discovered, towards the close of the year 1823, by Mr. Lemon, deputy keeper of the state papers, in the course of some researches he was making amongst the presses of his office. How it got there cannot now be determined;

* Some slight estimate may be formed of the virulence with which Milton was regarded by the royalists, from the fact that Dr. Sprat (the friend and biographer of Cowley), then dean of Westminster, refused to allow an inscription to be placed on the monument of Philips, because it contained the name of Milton, which he thought was too detestable to be seen on the wall of a building dedicated to religion. Happily, the author of the inscription, Atterbury, succeeded Sprat, and took care to insure a reception for his own lines.

for although it was found along with some corrected copies of foreign despatches written by Milton, and numerous papers relating to the popish trials and the Rye House plot, we have no reason to suppose that it was deposited there by Milton himself, since it is tolerably evident that it was not compiled until after he had retired from his secretaryship. Some curious circumstances, however, have been developed, which would lead to the inference that it had either been seized by the government together with other documents in the possession of Skinner, or that it had been delivered up by him to the secretary of state. It appears that Skinner, who was then fellow of Trinity college, Cambridge, entered into a negociation with Elzevir, the Dutch printer, for the publication of Milton's state letters, and this theological treatise; but Elzevir, alarmed at the boldness of the opinions advanced by the author, broke off the correspondence. The government now, by some means, became aware of the existence of this MS., and measures were immediately taken to prevent its publication, and compel Skinner to give it up. Isaac Barrow, master of Trinity college, was directed to warn Skinner not to publish any thing detrimental to church or state; and sir Joseph Williamson, secretary of state, called Skinner before him, in reference no doubt to that, as well as other matters. It is inferred from these particulars, that Skinner was forced to resign the production into the hands of the authorities. It is rather curious, however, that the papers should have been found, after so many years, exactly as they seem to have been originally consigned to the shelves of the office, wrapt up in the proof sheets of Elzevir's Horace, and superscribed "To Mr. Skinner, Merchant." A portion of MS. is in Skinner's hand-writing, and the remainder in a female hand, probably that of one of Milton's daughters, Mary or Deborah. The title of the work was "Joannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrina Christiana libri duo posthumi." By the command of his majesty George IV.,

it was placed in the hands of Dr. Sumner, who edited its publication with great care, furnishing a clear and exact translation of the original, and enriching the whole with a valuable body of elucidatory notes.

Toland, in speaking of this work, observes, that it could not be determined whether Milton intended it for publication, or only for his own private use. But the opening of the Introduction clearly shows, not only that Milton designed it for the world, but that he also meant it as an illustration of that liberty of opinion, and commentary, which he regarded as the most important right of all thinking Christians. He commences with these remarkable words:—"If I communicate the result of my inquiries to the world at large; if, as God is my witness, it be with a friendly and benignant feeling towards mankind, that I readily give as wide a circulation as possible to what I esteem my best and richest possessions, I hope to meet with a candid reception from all parties, and that none at least will take unjust offence, even though many things should be brought to light, which will at once be seen to differ from certain received opinions. I earnestly beseech all lovers of truth, not to cry out that the church is thrown into confusion by that freedom of discussion and inquiry, which is granted to the schools, and ought certainly to be refused to no believer, since we are ordered *to prove all things*, and since the daily progress of the light of truth is productive, far less of disturbance to the church, than of illumination and edification." These noble sentiments are further enforced in the next passage, which still more energetically enunciates that privilege which is founded upon the text, "Search the Scriptures." After a few observations he proceeds:—"It has also been my object to make it appear from the opinions I shall be found to have advanced, whether new or old, of how much consequence to the Christian religion is the liberty, not only of winnowing and sifting every doctrine, but also of thinking and even writing respecting it, according to our individual faith and persuasion; an inference which will

be stronger in proportion to the weight and importance of those opinions, or rather in proportion to the authority of Scripture, on the abundant testimony of which they rest. Without this liberty there is neither religion nor Gospel;—force alone prevails, by which it is disgraceful for the Christian religion to be supported. Without this liberty we are still enslaved—not, indeed, as formerly, under the divine law, but, what is worst of all, under the law of man, or to speak more truly, under a barbarous tyranny." These are imperishable sentences; and it is not easy to understand by what sophistry they can be assailed in any community of Christians who recognise the right of private judgment. It is not because free inquiry sometimes leads to error, that we should therefore refuse to permit it to lead us to truth. The best way to confute error, is to examine fully the evidences upon which it is presumed to rest. Truth can never suffer from investigation, and can never be established without it.

It would carry us far beyond the limits within which this memoir is restricted, to enter into the controversies that have arisen upon this recovered declaration of Milton's religious faith; but it may be remarked, as an extraordinary proof of the veneration in which Milton is held by all pious and learned men, that even those who have most effectually succeeded in exhibiting the true articles of his belief, and who are most strenuously opposed to them, speak of him upon these points in terms of implicit respect. Dr. Johnson is the only exception to this universal testimony; and it would appear that, not discerning precisely the salient point of heresy upon which Milton was exposed to attack, he comforted his spleen by condemning him, not for what he was, but for what he was not. This would be a paradox in the hands of any one else, but with Dr. Johnson it forms the basis of a pungent satire. He finds out that Milton was of no church; and without being supported by any authority known to the rest of Milton's biographers, he infers, that in the distribution of the poet's hours "there

was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; *omitting public prayers, he omitted all.*" Logic and charity are alike outraged by this conclusion. Because Milton did not go to church, Dr. Johnson resolves that he did not pray; and following him into the solitude of his closet, he announces to the world that the author of "Paradise Lost" did not commune with his God even when he was alone.

The Rev. Mr. Mitford, who objects more distinctly to Milton's theological opinions, discovers nothing in them to justify a doubt of Milton's piety. "It is well known," he observes, "that in the latter part of his life, Milton frequented no place of public worship; and bishop Newton has given various conjectures on the subject. It must, however, be remembered that he was old, blind, and infirm; that he was hostile to the liturgy of the established church, and at the same time not attached to any particular sect; that he had decidedly and for ever separated from the presbyterians; that he never frequented the church of the independents; and that his allowed liberty of belief hardly consisted with the tenets of any particular sect; but we are told that he never passed a day without private meditation and study of the Scriptures, and that some parts of his family frequented the offices of public prayer. Knowing his religious opinions, and considering the great infirmities of his health, who could have expected more?" These are the words of a clergyman of the church of England, whose authority on the subject of religious observances may safely be preferred to that of Dr. Johnson. The private devotional habits of Milton are attested by Richardson, whose work Dr. Johnson frequently quotes, and others. With the facts before him, it is incredible that a writer who was so well aware of the weight attached to his assertions, should not only suppress the truth, but affect to deal mercifully with the sin of omission which he had himself invented. "The neglect of prayer in his family," says the moralist, "was probably a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too

often happens, intercepted his reformation." So that Dr. Johnson not only accuses Milton of neglecting the duties of devotion, but suggests that he died before he had time to repent.

The history of Milton's religious impressions exhibits the struggles of a great mind in the search after truth. Many changes of opinion are attributed to him by his biographers in the course of his severe scriptural investigations. Commencing with puritanism, he deviated into Calvinism, next embraced the doctrines of Arminius, and finally, after passing through the tenets of the independents and anabaptists, he relinquished all the churches, and adopted a code of divinity for himself, which he derived from Holy Writ, and which, presenting here and there some points of agreement with particular sects, did not wholly coincide with any. He did not belong to any church—his religion was the Bible interpreted by himself.

His "Treatise on Christian Doctrines" confirms the suspicions which had been long entertained as to his views of the Trinity. Pope Benedict XIV. proscribed "Paradise Lost" on account of the discrepancies it betrays in reference to the unity of the Godhead; but it was not until the discovery of the long-lost body of divinity that Milton's adoption of the Arian heresy was clearly established. The work is divided into two parts,—the one of the Knowledge, and the other of the Service, of God. He assigns to the Saviour a place distinct from and inferior to that of God, and maintains that the Holy Spirit is an intelligent agent inferior to both: but he fully admits, at the same time, the doctrine of the Atonement. Mixed up with these views are other propositions hardly less startling—the immortality of matter, and the lawfulness of polygamy. Yet, throughout the assertion of these articles, he preserves a tone of humility and earnestness to which all readers of the treatise, of all denominations, have borne an admiring and concurrent testimony. Whatever commentaries his peculiar form of Christianity may elicit, all mankind

must agree in the acknowledgment of the purity of his convictions, the independence of his spirit, and the sincerity of his devotion.

Of Milton's prose works, perhaps, it is not assuming too much, to say that they exhibit more erudition of a miscellaneous kind, with more vigorous and varied original powers, than were ever before combined in the writings of a controversialist. His acquisitions in all departments of knowledge were immense. Intimate with all the schools of philosophy, he had surveyed all the literatures of almost all languages, ancient and modern. He wrote Latin with such facility, grace, and critical precision, that it would be difficult to decide whether his treatises in that language might not successfully contest for superiority with his vernacular productions. He was acquainted with the two dialects of the Hebrew, with Greek, Spanish, French, and Italian; in the last of which he composed several poems that surprised even the Italians themselves into unbounded admiration. Yet it is by no means sure that the prose writings of Milton are likely to survive to remote times. The style is for the most part rugged, and the diction harsh and mixed. His mind was so deeply imbued with classical knowledge, that he seems to have selected modes of expression congenial to his own tastes and habits, rather than to have adapted himself to the genius of the English language. It must be frankly admitted that, in this respect, he was not an improver but a deformer of his native tongue; which, as if it had broken down under the weight of his invention, he constantly strengthened by infusions from other sources. He was emphatically a man of ideas, and not of words: in him, thought created its own language; and his eloquence is identical with the variety of his conceptions. The pleasure to be derived from his prose essays, therefore, must always be confined to the few "who love to have their faculties tasked by master spirits." The wonderful energy, comprehensiveness, and profundity of his productions must always render them objects of

curiosity; but it may be doubted whether they are ever likely to become familiar to the great bulk of readers. His letters of state were printed in 1694; and a complete edition of his historical, political, and miscellaneous works was published in Holland, by Toland, in 1698. From that period no new edition of the complete works appeared until 1733, when they were edited by Dr. Birch, who, in 1774, re-issued them in quarto. The next edition, after an interval of fifty years, was brought out by Dr. Symmons in 1804; which was followed, at a distance of thirty years, by another complete reprint, edited by Mr. Fletcher. The last attempt to revive Milton's prose was in 1836, when Mr. St. John made a selection, in two volumes, of those treatises that appeared most likely to attract the attention of the public. It may be inferred from this enumeration of the editions, that the influence of Milton's essays has been gradually diminishing: but we must not look for the causes of this decline of his popularity solely to his manner, but in a great degree to the subjects of which he treated. He wrote in an age of contention; and his topics, often involving general principles, were, notwithstanding, always addressed to the temper and prejudices of the time. Controversy loses much of its attraction, when its personal invectives and immediate application cease to be felt or understood: and Milton's tracts are so strongly tinged with party spirit, that it is now almost impossible to sympathise with the fierce excitements under which they were produced.

But his fame can afford this deduction. It is enough for the highest ambition of human genius, to have written "Paradise Lost." In that great poem, his whole nature, his vast acquirements, his religious aspirations, his sublime passion for liberty, his command of all the springs of feeling, his knowledge of man in his relations with the Creator, his poetical enthusiasm, and his gorgeous imagination, are concentrated into one intense focus. There never was in any language a work about which

so much has been written, and concerning which so much remains to be written, without exhausting its varieties or its praise. It is alike grand in its delineations and in its suggestions. The conception alone is a miracle of power. When the poem was translated into French, it elicited so much applause, that the cardinal Polignac, who had not read it, thought that its merits must have been greatly exaggerated; an opinion which he recalled when the arguments of the books were transmitted to him by an English gentleman without the poem. "The man," said the cardinal, "who could contrive such a plan, must be one of the greatest poets that ever was born." *

"Paradise Lost," has been translated into every language in Europe, and has employed the erudition and ingenuity of the most distinguished critics. Differences of opinion exist amongst them upon various points, — the Versification — the Machinery — the Characters — the Dialogue; but the magnitude of the subject, and the completeness of its execution, are admitted upon all hands. Pope thought that the style was exotic and unnatural; that too much learning had been displayed in the treatment; and that the blank verse, which, indeed, the majority of critics consider unsuited to our language, would not have been borne, had not the subject "turned upon such strange out-of-the-world things." Dryden yielded a churlish assent to the irregular numbers, involutions, and inversions of a measure, which in other hands he would unsparingly have condemned. But a century of small criticisms of this kind might be collected without throwing any additional light upon the true characteristics of the poem. The way, says Hazlitt, to defend Milton from all impugners, is to take down the book and read it.

Newton, Atterbury, and Warton have elucidated the text of Milton in annotations that must always be read with interest and profit. But the noblest exposition of

* Spence's Anecdotes.

"Paradise Lost," is contained in the criticism of Addison. When he wrote, criticism as an art was in its infancy, — it had not yet become resolved into laws. But he had before him the great models of the antique epic, and he brought to the inquiry an exquisite and refined taste, and just principles founded in reason and in nature. The grasp of his criticism is complete, — it expounds with wonderful truth all the elements that enter into the poem — and explains the design in so familiar and perspicuous a spirit, that even those who cannot appreciate the magnificence of the poetry, are made to understand the structure of the poem. Dr. Johnson laboured under the disadvantage of coming after Addison. It is probable that, had he been the first to open this world of glorious invention, he would have produced a more elaborate essay; but it is not equally certain that he would have been so just in his decisions. Where Addison praised, Johnson could not heedlessly condemn; and he was compelled to distribute his approval and his censure with the greater care, lest a comparison with his predecessor should prove unfavourable to his reputation. The influence of Addison's criticism is obvious all throughout the cautious investigation which Johnson bestowed upon the poem. Dismissing the other productions of Milton with flippant eulogy or satirical contempt, he approaches "Paradise Lost" with an air of pomp and deliberation. His examination of the poem is unquestionably a masterpiece of critical sagacity; but it is impossible not to perceive that it is framed on Addison, whose principles he adopts, and whose opinions, cast in more felicitous and striking sentences, he repeats.

But there are modes of rendering the genius of a great poet more obvious to the world at large, than through the interpretations of scholastic and methodical criticism. Enough has been done to explain the plan and conduct of the epic, but not enough to unfold the mysteries of its poetry, considered apart from the wondrous fabric of the divine allegory. It is reserved for

writers who have an acute sensibility for beauty, a true sympathy with nature, and an enthusiasm superior to rules and dogmas, to show us the imaginative part of such productions, disengaging the spirit from the body to which it gives life. There are some fragments of criticism extant, which may be referred to as illustrations of the shape which all future essays upon Milton's poetry are likely to take, and which, for the sake of popular intelligence, it is desirable they should take. The following passage, in which the hand of a distinguished living writer will be recognised, is a brief specimen.

"The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton, is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts upon the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests — not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the "Iliad." Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion; but takes the whole upon himself, and sets his images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make up the melody.

"We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning, than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present, and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory

give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence—substitute one synonyme for another,—and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it, would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying 'Open Wheat,' 'Open Barley,' to the door which obeyed no sound but 'Open Sesame.' The miserable failure of Dryden, in his attempt to re-write some parts of the 'Paradise Lost,' is a remarkable instance of this.

"In support of these observations, we may remark, that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known, or more frequently repeated, than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood—like the song of our country heard in a strange land—they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history: another places us among the moral scenery and manners of a distant country: a third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood,—the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize: a fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance,—the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses." *

Hazlitt, who despised the technicalities of criticism, while he accomplished its loftiest aim, has left us some beautiful outlines of the character of Milton's genius; and it is only to be lamented that a writer, who was every way so capable of penetrating its depths, did not enter more largely into the subject. In his Lectures upon the English Poets, he gives us glimpses of Milton's

* Mr. Macauley, in the Edinburgh Review, No. lxxxiv.

grandeur, too brief to satisfy our curiosity, but revealing in flashes of light some of those subtle characteristics, which, discerned for a moment, are never forgotten. Of this description is the following eloquent passage:—

"Milton, therefore, did not write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength, and with a resolution to leave nothing undone which it was in his power to do. He always labours, and almost always succeeds. He strives hard to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost: he surrounds it with every possible association of beauty or grandeur, whether moral, intellectual, or physical. He refines on his descriptions of beauty; loading sweets on sweets, till the sense aches at them; and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation, that 'makes Ossa like a wart.' In Milton, there is always an appearance of effort: in Shakspeare, never.

"Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer. He is a writer of centos, and yet in originality scarcely inferior to Homer. The power of his mind is stamped on every line. The fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials.

"In reading his works, we feel ourselves under the influence of a mighty intellect, that the nearer it approaches to others, becomes more distinct from them. The quantity of art in him shows the strength of his genius: the weight of his intellectual obligations would have oppressed any other writer. Milton's learning has the effect of intuition. He describes objects, of which he could only have read in books, with the vividness of actual observation. His imagination has the force of nature; he makes words tell as pictures."

In another place he vindicates Milton from an aspersion that has been cast upon the truthfulness of his images by unappreciating critics.

"There is also the same depth of impression in his descriptions of the objects of all the different senses, whether colours, or sounds, or smells — the same absorption of his mind in whatever engaged his attention at the time. It has been, indeed, objected to Milton, by a common perversity of criticism, that his ideas were musical rather than picturesque,—as if, because they were in the highest degree musical, they must be (to keep the sage critical balance even, and to allow no one man to possess two qualities at the same time) proportionably deficient in other respects. But Milton's poetry is not cast in any such narrow, common-place mould; it is not so barren of resources. His worship of the Muse was not so simple or confined. A sound arises "like a steam of rich distilled perfumes;" we hear the pealing organ; but the incense on the altars is also there, and the statues of the gods are ranged around. The ear, indeed, predominates over the eye, because it is more immediately affected, and because the language of music blends more immediately with, and forms a more natural accompaniment to, the variable and indefinite associations of ideas conveyed by words. But where the associations of the imagination are not the principal thing, the individual object is given by Milton with equal force and beauty. The strongest and best proof of this, as a characteristic power of his mind, is, that the persons of Adam and Eve, of Satan, &c. are always accompanied in our imagination with the grandeur of the naked figure: they convey to us the idea of sculpture."

Again, of his versification: —

"Milton's blank verse is the only blank verse in the language (except Shakspeare's) that deserves the name of verse. Dr. Johnson, who had modelled his ideas of versification on the regular sing-song of Pope, condemns the "Paradise Lost" as harsh and unequal. I shall not pretend to say that this is not sometimes the case; for where a degree of excellence beyond the mechanical rules of art is attempted, the poet must

sometimes fail. But I imagine that there are more perfect examples in Milton, of musical expression, or of an adaptation of the sound and movement of the verse to the meaning of the passage, than in all our other writers, whether of rhyme or blank verse, put together (with the exception already mentioned). Spenser is the most harmonious of our poets, as Dryden is the most sounding and varied of our rhymists. But in neither is there any thing like the same ear for music, the same power of approximating the varieties of poetical to those of musical rhythm, as there is in our great epic poet. The sound of his lines is moulded into the expression of the sentiment—almost of the very image. They rise or fall, pause, or hurry rapidly on, with exquisite art, but without the least trick or affectation, as the occasion seems to require." *

To these must be added a part of Channing's character of Milton, exhibiting a more comprehensive view of the attributes of the poet than has generally been taken by other writers. The author of the following brilliant criticism justly observes that the splendour of Milton's fame as a poet has had the effect of obscuring his other, and not less remarkable, claims to distinction as a scholar and a philosopher.

"In speaking of the *intellectual* qualities of Milton, we may observe that the very splendour of his poetic fame has tended to obscure or conceal the extent of his mind, and the variety of its energies and attainments. To many, he seems only a poet, when in truth he was a profound scholar, a man of vast compass of thought, embued thoroughly with all ancient and modern learning, and able to master, to mould, to impregnate with his own intellectual power, his great and various acquisitions. He had not learned the superficial doctrines of a later day,—that poetry flourishes most in an uncultivated soil, and that imagination shapes its brightest visions from the mists of a superstitious age; and he had no dread

* Lectures on the English Poets: by William Hazlitt, 1818.

of accumulating knowledge, lest it should oppress and smother his genius. He was conscious of that within him, which could quicken all knowledge, and wield it with ease and might; which could give freshness to old truths, and harmony to discordant thoughts; which could bind together, by living ties and mysterious affinities, the most remote discoveries, and rear fabrics of glory and beauty from the rude materials which other minds had collected. Milton had that universality which marks the highest order of intellect. Though accustomed almost from infancy to drink at the fountain of classical literature, he had nothing of the pedantry and fastidiousness which disdains all other draughts. His healthy mind delighted in genius, in whatever soil or in whatever age it burst forth and poured out its fulness. He understood too well the rights, the dignity, and pride of creative imagination, to lay on it the laws of the Greek or Roman school. Parnassus was not to him the only holy ground of genius. He felt that poetry was as a universal presence. Great minds were every where his kindred. He felt the enchantment of Oriental fiction, surrendered himself to the strange creations of 'Araby the Blest,' and delighted still more in the romantic spirit of chivalry, and in the tales of wonder in which it was embodied. Accordingly, his poetry reminds us of the ocean, which adds to its own boundlessness contributions from all regions under heaven. Nor was it only in the department of imagination that his acquisitions were vast. He travelled over the whole field of knowledge as far as it had then been explored. His various philological attainments were used to put him in possession of the wisdom stored in all countries where the intellect had been cultivated. The natural philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, history, theology, and political science of his own and former times were familiar to him. Never was there a more unconfined mind; and we would cite Milton as a practical example of the benefits of that universal culture of intellect, which forms one distinction of our times, but which some

dread as unfriendly to original thought. Let us remember, that mind is in its own nature diffusive. Its object is the universe, which is strictly one, or bound together by infinite connections and correspondences; and accordingly its natural progress is from one to another field of thought; and wherever original power, creative genius, exists, the mind, far from being distracted or oppressed by the variety of its acquisitions, will see more and more common bearings, and hidden and beautiful analogies, in all the objects of knowledge—will see mutual light shed from truth to truth—and will compel, as with a kingly power, whatever it understands, to yield some tribute of proof, or illustration, or splendour to whatever topic it would unfold." *

Believing that a complete estimate of Milton can hardly be formed by any single mind, I am the more impressed with the necessity of bringing together these few passages, taken, if I may use the expression, at different points of sight, by men so eminently qualified to survey the genius of the poet, the philosopher, and the politician. Milton, like Bacon, embraced a vast extent of learning; his mighty intellect explored many recondite branches of science that are rarely comprehended within the range of individual inquiry; he laid under contribution almost every department of knowledge; and we cannot hope to attain a perfect development of the wondrous combination, except through the labours of numerous commentators. With this conviction of the importance of exhibiting the character of Milton in its various phases, I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of enriching the pages of this biography with the following true and eloquent portraiture, which is so felicitous in conception, and so faithful in the colouring, that it ought to accompany all future memoirs and editions of Milton, as the grandest vindication of his fame in our language, on those points of his life and works to which it especially refers.

"He was not a puritan. He was not a free-thinker.

* Remarks on the Character and Writings of Milton: by Dr. Channing.

He was not a cavalier. In his character, the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable cavalier, his nature selected and drew for itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the puritans, he lived

'As ever in his great task-master's eye.'

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge, and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt for external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolised by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honour and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and associations were such as harmonise best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master, and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listened to the song of the syrens; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination, never impaired his reasoning

powers. The statesman was proof against the splendour, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments pressed in his 'Treatises on Prelacy,' with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the 'Penseroso,' which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency, which, more than any thing else, raises his character in our estimation; because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed, in order to do what he considered to be his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents; but his hand is firm. He does nought in hate, but all in honour. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

"That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendour, still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for that species of freedom, which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood,—the freedom of the human mind,—is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against ship-money and the star-chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press, and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the king and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of

the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering, when they should have thought of disenchanting.

'Oh, ye mistook! Ye should have snatched the wand!
Without the rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the lady that sits here
Bound in strong fetters, fixed and motionless.'

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupified people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the presbyterians — for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battles; but he turned away in disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the presbyterian wolf.* With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system, in that sublime treatise, which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand, and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses, than against those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded,— the servile worship of eminent men, and the irrational dread of innovation.

"That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear when the outworks had been carried, and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But when his opinions seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bear-

* Sonnet to Cromwell.

ing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapours, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions, must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide. He ridiculed the Eikon. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the God of light and fertility—

> 'Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.'

"It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages, compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff, with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the "Paradise Lost," has he ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, 'a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.'" *

An attempt was made by Mr. Dawes, in the early part of the 18th century, to translate the "Paradise Lost" into Greek; but, as might have been expected, the result was a failure. Other Greek versions were made with no better success. Mr. Hogg, a Scotchman, rendered it (along with the "Paradise Regained," and "Samson Ago-

* Mr. Macauley, in the Edinburgh Review, No. lxxxiv.

nistes") into Latin in 1690; Dr. Trapp followed with a Latin translation in 1741; and Mr. Dobson completed another in 1753, which, being considered the best, was rewarded with the sum of 1000*l.* proposed for the undertaking by Mr. Auditor Benson. These translations cannot be regarded otherwise than as the ingenious exercises of patient scholars. "Paradise Lost" has also been translated into Portuguese and Spanish: one half of it was rendered into High Dutch, in blank verse, about the middle of the 17th century, by the erudite Theodore Haak; and the whole into Low Dutch, in 1728: Jon Thorlakson translated it into Icelandic: Rolli and Mariottini have given versions of it in Italian blank verse: and two translations were made into German, the one by Frederic William Zacharia, in blank verse, and the other by Bodmer. Of all the foreign versions of "Paradise Lost," the last two approach nearest to the spirit of the original, from the congenial character and kindred sources of the German and English languages.

But our "lively neighbours," the French, have exceeded all other countries in the number of their translations of Milton, as they have, unquestionably, transcended them in absurdity. No person can be surprised at the blunders that have been committed in the French versions of the "Paradise Lost," and the minor poems of Milton, who is acquainted with Voltaire's specimens of Shakspeare, with the abbé du Resnel's translation of Pope's "Essay on Man," or the sieur de la Pilonnière's version of the "Essay on Criticism." It would seem that "that detestable French heroic couplet, which epigrammatises every thing *," has the effect of destroying the sacred fire of our English poetry. But it might be hoped that this misfortune, which attends almost all attempts at metrical versions, would be averted in pure translations. Here, however, the interpreters are, if possible, even more at fault than in their rhythmical labours. The prevailing peculiarity of the

* Note in Southey's Thalaba.

French versions, in prose and verse, of Milton, is not merely that they fail in truly rendering the original, but that they transform it into fantastical shapes to suit their own notions. They give it as they would themselves have written it, had they conceived the original thoughts and images. Their translations are French reflections, — that is, such reflections as are presented in false mirrors. It would not be worth while to notice these ingenious distortions of Milton's poetry, were it not that the opinions generally entertained in France concerning it are founded upon these monkey imitations. Frenchmen, who have not had an opportunity of consulting the original, may be excused for speaking contemptuously of a poet who is known to them only through a medium that completely deforms his images and his language, and constantly misrepresents his meaning. To satisfy the reader's curiosity upon these points, I will transcribe two or three passages from some of the translations to which I have referred. Take the beautiful lines in " L'Allegro " —

> " Towers and battlements it sees
> Bosomed high in tufted trees,
> Where perhaps some beauty lies,
> The cynosure of neighbouring eyes ; "

which the translator renders, " Au milieu d'un bosquet, j'apperçois un château, où peut-être quelque Beauté fait les délices et le tourment de ses voisons ! " But this passage is actually commendable for its integrity in comparison with the version of the following lines in the same poem —

> " Then to the well-trod stage anon,
> If Jonson's learned sock be on ;
> Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
> Warble his native wood-notes wild," &c.

Requesting the reader to refer to the whole passage in the original, I give the translation. " Si Johnson doit jouer, si Shakspeare, enfant chéri de l'ingénieux Caprice, met sur la Scène quelque Pastorale de sa façon,

on court au theatre. Aussi, rien n'est-il plus efficace contre les soucis que les pièces de ce dernier. Sa poësie, digne de l'immortalité, jointe à la douceur de son insinuante musique, pénétre l'âme et la transporte, tant ses Airs Lydiens sont gracieux et tendres. Les voix se liquéfient, en quelque sorte, en exprimant la délicatesse des fredons et des roulades qu'il trace sur le papier, en développant ces liaisons fines qui sont comme l'âme de l'harmonie," &c. Any commentary upon this passage would really spoil its inimitable comicality; but it is necessary to observe that the translator attaches a note to the name of Jonson — Ben Jonson, whom he calls Johnson, — to inform his readers who that celebrated person was. "Johnson," says he — "fameux acteur du theatre Anglois!"

In the bungling attempt to render the more difficult passages, these translators have recourse to elucidatory notes, in which they generally make the poet responsible for something as nearly as possible contrary to the original meaning. A multitude of curious instances might be cited; but one or two must suffice. The well known lines in "Il Penseroso" (which the blundering Frenchman calls "Il Pensero"), beginning —

"Or let my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato," &c. —

are turned into French with such dexterous art, as to render it a matter of some difficulty to detect the precise purport of the text. To clear up the obscurities of his own version, the translator adds the following note to the allusion to Plato: —"Il établit que les ames sont en partie spirituelles et en partie corporelles; qu'unies chacune à quelque Astre qui fait sa félicité, elles descendent ici-bas pour animer des corps, tantôt d'hommes, tantôt de bêtes; et qu'enfin elles se réuniront aux mêmes Astres auxquels leur bonheur est attaché. Si Milton s'en est tenu à l'opinion de son maître sur cet article,

il a épousé bien des impertinences, pour ne rien dire de plus." After this, it is not very wonderful that Milton should be misunderstood and depreciated in France. Such commentaries could proceed only from a translator who gives Melpomene "splendid buskins;" who renders the "studious cloisters pale," into "les cabinets des curieux;" and who, mistaking a swain for a swan, and utterly unable to comprehend how that bird could touch "the tender stops of various quills," escapes from the difficulty by making it lift up its wing and pipe with its bill amongst its plumes!

The most celebrated translation into French verse of the "Paradise Lost," is by the abbé Delille, who obtained from the booksellers, for his performance, no less than 1000*l*. A collection of the misconceptions, paraphrases, and ridiculous interpolations exhibited in this extraordinary work, would make a rare fund of jests for those who are curious in such matters. In some places the abbé expands fifteen lines into fifty; on other occasions he substitutes new images in lieu of Milton's; and not unfrequently he so completely deforms the original, that not merely its spirit, but its meaning, evaporates in his hands. Where Milton speaks of the Tuscan artist viewing the moon "through optic glass," the abbé renders it "un long tube montrait au Newton des Toscans," although Newton's discoveries were not published until twelve years after Milton's death. He makes Eve swear, places her in rather an ambiguous position between Adam and the angel, calls her a brilliant coquet, and makes her milk the goats and the sheep!

While Milton has been thus caricatured and burlesqued abroad, we must not take credit to ourselves for having been careful of his text at home. "It is a subject of deep regret to all lovers of poetry, that the text of Milton should have become so perverted and deteriorated through successive editions, that there remains now not a single edition extant, which presents a faithful transcript of the original poem as it was printed under his own corrections. Errors have obtained currency in a variety of

ways.* The impression that, because Milton was blind, the two editions printed in his life-time could not have had the advantage of his supervision, led, probably, in the first instance to the introduction of numerous alterations, in the exercise of what was supposed to be a sound critical discretion. But this was a mistake. The original editions of 1667 and 1674 evince remarkable care in the superintendence of the press, and perhaps received the more care from the increased solicitude which the want of sight may be presumed to have created in the author. The edition of 1674 contains Milton's last corrections; and a comparison with the former edition proves with what extreme minuteness and precision he descended into the slightest points susceptible of improvement, and how anxiously he endeavoured to give the last touches of perfection to the work that had occupied so much of his thoughts throughout the greater part of his life. He felt that he was bequeathing a splendid legacy to posterity, and he spared no pains to render it worthy of immortality. Another source of error has arisen from the adoption of changes in the orthography, by way of modernising the poetry; which has, in some instances, injured the rhythm, and in a still greater number of cases, spoiled the intention of the poet. There is no sound reason why Milton should be thus daintily minced; and we have the good taste that has preserved Spenser in his purity as a proof that it is not necessary. A third, and doubtless the most fruitful, spring of corruption may be traced to sundry attempts of ignorant and presumptuous editors to clear up obscurities; and in their efforts they have made what they imagined they found. In

* As a proof of the fact that errors crept early into the editions of Milton, it may be mentioned, that in the third edition, published in 1678, which, although it was issued with Milton's *imprimatur*, was not revised by him, is full of literal errors, false punctuation, and a multitude of such mistakes as are calculated to destroy the integrity of the text. The most remarkable instance that can be cited here of the negligence of the printers and superintendents of that edition, is the total omission of an entire line in the eleventh book of "Paradise Lost:"

"On each hand slaughter and gigantic deeds."

This line continued to be omitted in each succeeding impression, until, by some lucky chance, it was restored to its place in the seventh edition, published in 1705.

the edition of 1674 these obscurities vanish in the clear light of a just and perspicuous punctuation.

That attempts have been made towards the purification of the text must, I suppose, be allowed; for it is not to be imagined that some of the many editors of Milton's poetry did not perceive the existence of the defect, and endeavour to remedy it. But the speculations of ingenious critics cannot supply what is required; and none of them have ventured to do that which can alone restore the genuine text — reprint with literal exactness the edition of 1674. Milton best knew how to render the spirit of his own conceptions; and if we desire to determine how his lines ought to be printed and punctuated, we must ascertain how he printed and punctuated them himself. His editors have oppressed him with loads of trivial and word-hunting notes, but neglected to render justice to his text.*

To consult and compare all the editions of Milton — to trace with untiring vigilance the origin of small errors, and to follow and expose them in their expansion, under conjectural emendations, into great corruptions — to revise word by word, and point by point, the whole mass of his poetry, and to bring out the true language of the original, as it was delivered by the lips of the poet, and transferred to the press under his own care, — would be the work of a life; not merely the work of many years, but of many years of anxious toil and unquenchable enthusiasm. Few individuals could be found to undertake such a labour, and still fewer qualified to discharge it with the judgment and integrity it would demand. And, when executed, what reward could be looked for but the gratification of having redeemed the fame of an immortal genius from the darkness of a cloud of ignorant

* The most correct editions I have seen of Milton's poems, are Mr. Pickering's, and the edition by sir Egerton Brydges; but neither of them are accurate, and both are chargeable with the admission of "modern improvements." I have carefully compared several passages in the latter with the edition of 1674, and find that while some of the grosser corruptions of former copies are thrown out, not a few misprints are retained, while an amending spirit has been at work in the punctuation, with the usual result of paralyzing the sinews of the text.

printers, speculative critics, and presumptuous editors? Unhappily, in this country, there is no academy of letters to encourage a literary toil of this kind; and the individual who would embark in a task of such perilous magnitude, must be prepared with a lofty courage to endure the worst of disappointments in the end. Posterity would appreciate and honour his zeal, but from the contemporary age he would have nothing to anticipate but coldness and neglect.

Yet this gigantic and unpromising labour has been performed, although its results have never been laid before the public. The opportunity of making known to the world the most remarkable instance of devotion to the memory of a poet, to be found, perhaps, in the annals of literature, is favourably presented by a new biography of Milton; and the reader will feel that the page which contains the brief outlines of the record is replete with deep and unusual interest.

The late Dr. Hill, Regius professor of physic in Trinity college, Dublin—an accomplished scholar, whose intimate acquaintance with classical literature gave great weight to his opinions — had long felt, in common with all judicious critics, the want of a new edition of Milton. But that feeling, which in others is casual and slight, was in him so earnest and profound, that it may be said to have coloured his whole life. From an early age he had been a passionate lover of Milton's poetry; and that love, which drew him so often to the perusal of his favourite works, led him at last to investigate the sources, growth, and nature of the corruptions, which by frequent examinations and comparisons he detected in a greater or lesser degree in all the editions that passed under his review. At first, probably, this was enjoyed as a pleasure congenial to his refined taste and varied erudition; but as he penetrated farther into the subject, it became resolved into a sacred duty. He dedicated himself to the single purpose of restoring the text of "Paradise Lost," with an ardour that cannot be contemplated without admiration; and his labours were crowned with a

success commensurate to his indefatigable and unparalleled perseverance. It is easy to describe the scope and character of such toils,—the wondrous diligence requisite to prosecute in detail such a vast and almost endless diversity of minute inquiries,—the scrupulous collation of an infinite number of verbal points,—the gathering in of a multitude of collateral testimonies,—the tracing of apparent inconsistencies to the final establishment of some singular and unexpected internal homogeneity,—the skill to discern, the zeal to remove, and the firmness to pursue to complete extirpation, the impurities that had, from edition to edition, from one editor to another, been infused into this grand poem: it is easy, perhaps, to describe all this; but it is impossible fully to estimate the laborious process, covering a track of years from youth to age, and engrossing all the faculties of a mind stored with knowledge and embued with a reverential worship of the loftiest creations of the Muse.

The objects attained by Dr. Hill, whatever he might have proposed in the first instance, before the immense difficulties of the undertaking were fully developed to him, embrace every end to which inquiry can possibly be directed;—not merely the production of the perfect text, but the correction of all the errors of all the editions that were published, to the date of Boydell's in 1794. In the discursive course of reading necessary to accomplish this nearly incredible labour—including the annotations, and biographies, and the numerous critical and anecdotical works that cast side-lights upon the poem—he could not fail to accumulate an enormous mass of miscellaneous materials. Of these he made the most careful use—not expending a single line upon superfluous expressions, but condensing and arranging his collected facts into lucid order: thus, amongst other valuable statements, presenting a complete account of all the engraved portraits of Milton, and of all the plates that, from the earliest edition, have embellished the various issues of his works. The information contained in these statements is surprising alike by its extent and its parti-

cularity. Another curious feature thrown up by his researches, is a view of the translations of Milton into foreign languages, which he carefully examined, and not without some jealousy for the glory of the poet. A section, also, he devoted to the ingenious hypercriticism of a modern commentator—showing with admirable skill the folly and worthlessness of a class of writers who some years ago had grown into a species of literary nuisance. To the text itself,—the text of 1674 collated sedulously with that of 1667, even to the distinguishing peculiarities of initial letters, the choice of modes of spelling, varied agreeably to the rhythm (a peculiarity in Milton which Dr. Hill clearly establishes, and which has never been noticed, because never discovered by any previous investigator), and the closest precision in punctuation,—he added a body of notes of inestimable value, full of matter, highly suggestive, and governed all throughout by an unerring judgment. His tables of Errata, and his Index, would be considered, however, by the bibliographical student, the most striking portions of the whole. In the tables of errata he institutes a comparison between the nine editions that succeeded to that which Milton personally superintended, in which all the variances in orthography, in transposition, and in the use and division of words that occur amongst them, betraying the errors and corruptions of the different dates, are minutely exhibited; and in the index he includes every word and letter in "Paradise Lost," with references to all the places where they are repeated, so as to present an infallible test of the correctness of all future editions. This is a marvellous exercise of human ingenuity—a task which ordinary powers could not have effected, and from which even great powers, associated with less energy, would have recoiled.

The whole of this stupendous labour is introduced by a preface, written, as we have a right to expect from such a man, with singular clearness, beauty, and taste. His prolegomena is a masterpiece of critical disquisition, unravelling the most involved intricacies with ease, and

discussing with simplicity the most profound questions concerned in the general investigation. It may not reduce the interest of this slight sketch, to add, that it is tinged with a feeling of melancholy, welling up, perhaps, out of the bitter conviction that this labour of a life was accomplished in vain. Dr. Hill did not live to give the precious fruits of his toil to the press.

The MS. volumes containing these reliques are in themselves a curiosity, and will, doubtless, at some future day be estimated amongst the treasures of the cabinet. They are written in an exquisitely small, diamond hand, with an uniformity, brilliancy, and accuracy that might justify a comparison with some of the beautiful illuminated writings of the middle ages: and as several languages are incidentally introduced, the peculiar delicacy in the formation of the letters is rendered the more evident by contrast.

Having been favoured with the perusal of these MSS., I knew not how I could better express the gratification I derived from them, than by this imperfect outline of their contents. I do not feel justified in entering into any closer examination of Dr. Hill's inquiries, because I hope they will yet be given to the world; and it is necessary to observe, that I cautiously abstained from referring to these valuable papers, until I had concluded the biography of Milton, lest I might unconsciously avail myself of any part, however trifling, of the information they convey. It was due to the researches of that laborious investigator to treat his work with implicit respect, and not to forestall a fragment of his labours; but to wait with patience, at some cost of regret, until the whole production, in its complete form, shall find its way to the public. How long it is destined to remain in MS. must depend, it is to be feared, upon the intelligence of readers, and the enterprise of booksellers. Men who devote their lives to such studies, are seldom able to effect the ultimate object for which they struggled. The enthusiasm that sustained them through their long travail, is too often doomed to be blighted just as they

have achieved the "last crown of their toils." But if an edition of Milton, free from all corruptions, and enriched by a spirit of criticism worthy of the poet's fame, is ever to appear, it is not an idle speculation to assert that it is from these MSS. it is most likely to be derived.

Reverting to the subject of our narrative, there remain only a few personal particulars to bring the memoir of Milton to a conclusion.

Although the character of the poet and controversialist presents a general aspect of inflexibility,—a quality which we involuntarily associate with the firm maintenance of principles—assuming through the dim distance of time something of a tone of hardness,—yet Milton was a man of gentle qualities, calm in his bearing, of a mild and cheerful temper, and full of human sympathies and affections. Study had given him an air of tranquillity and reserve, but not of austerity. In person he is said to have been handsome, and in his youth had such a look of delicate beauty, that he was called the Lady of the College; with a fair and soft complexion, and light brown hair parted over his forehead and floating down his shoulders, he almost realised one of those fine creations of spiritual shapes which he has described in the "Paradise Lost." His eyes were grey; and Wood says that they were not quick—which, as Milton was an expert swordsman, may be doubted; yet they preserved their brightness even after they had lost their use. In person he was of the middle height; but from his vigorous habits of mind and body, he never acquired corpulency. In the first engraved portrait, attached to the edition of the minor poems in 1645, and taken when Milton was only one and twenty, he is represented with moustaches, and a tuft of hair between the lower lip and the chin, giving a stern and morose expression to the face; which so irritated Milton, that he assailed the engraver in a caustic Greek epigram, which was written under the print in his own hand, and which, by the ignorance of succeeding engravers, was afterwards attached to other copies, as if it

were an appropriate or eulogistic inscription. Milton seems to have felt a reasonable consciousness of the comeliness of his personal appearance, and to have resented any criticisms of a personal kind with some enthusiasm. The following passage, extracted from one of his numerous vindications, is his own picture of himself.

"I do not believe that I was ever once noted for deformity, by any one who ever saw me; but the praise of beauty I am not anxious to obtain. My stature certainly is not tall; but it rather approaches the middle than the diminutive. Yet what if it were diminutive, when so many men, illustrious both in peace and war, have been the same? And how can that be called diminutive, which is great enough for every virtuous achievement? Nor, though very thin, was I ever deficient in courage or in strength; and I was wont constantly to exercise myself in the use of the sword, as long as it comported with my habits and my years. Armed with this weapon, as I usually was, I should have thought myself a match for any one, though stronger than myself; and I felt perfectly secure against the assault of any open enemy. At this moment I have the same courage, the same strength, though not the same eyes; yet so little do they betray any external appearance of injury, that they are as unclouded and bright, as the eyes of those who most distinctly see. In this instance alone I am a dissembler against my will. My face, which is said to indicate a total privation of blood, is of a complexion entirely opposite to the pale and cadaverous; so that, though I am more than forty years old, there is scarcely any one to whom I do not appear ten years younger than I am; and the smoothness of my skin is not, in the least, affected by the wrinkles of age."

In his household Milton pursued a regular plan in the distribution of time, which he rarely allowed to be interrupted. In his youth his favourite hours for study were from evening into midnight; but the injury sus-

tained by his sight induced him to change his system, and to begin his labours early in the morning. He generally retired to rest about nine o'clock, and was prepared by four in the morning in summer, and five in winter, to commence with his books. When he was not inclined to get up, he usually had some person to read at his bedside. After rising, a chapter of the Hebrew Bible was read to him, and then he devoted himself to close application until twelve. An hour's exercise in the garden followed, when he went to dinner, which always consisted of the simplest fare; for he never indulged in luxuries, and rarely tasted wine. After dinner, he went to the organ, and sang, or made his wife sing, who is said to have had a musical voice although not a musical ear. When this brief relaxation was over, he resumed his studies until six o'clock, then gave a couple of hours to his friends and supper (something very light — such as fruit), and then after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water went to bed. He generally dined in the kitchen, which was rather a fashion of the times, than a mean or ill-bred usage. Kitchens in those days were the most comfortable of all dining-rooms.

When he dictated in the day, it is related of him that he usually sat obliquely in his elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm, which, if not quite so graceful a posture, is at least more easy and natural than the somewhat rigid position in which he is exhibited in Romney's clever and affecting picture. Milton's attachment for his last wife shows how much real tenderness survived the trials and disappointments of his life. In one account of her she is described as a "genteel person, of a peaceful and agreeable humour." She had golden tresses, and Milton is supposed to have designed her portrait in the picture of Eve, as he is suspected of having drawn himself in Adam; but much of that beautiful delineation must have derived its charm from his imagination, as he was blind when he married her, and must, therefore, have formed his out-

lines from description. But blind men have a miraculous sense of beauty, which is hardly intelligible to others. They have a thousand ways of estimating it; their ideal is composed of a multitude of exquisite associations, and if they do not produce accurate resemblances, they create, at all events, delightful images that have a refined affinity to truth. The tone of voice — the laugh — the footstep — modes of expression — energy or languor of thought and utterance — and a multitude of exquisite types that escape all other observers, convey an eloquent and perfect language to them.

The poet's widow survived her husband fifty-two years, and died at a great age at Nantwich in Cheshire, in 1727.

When all that industry can compile from scattered authorities respecting a man like Milton, has been exhausted, enquiry is naturally directed to ascertain what is known of his family and his descendants: but upon these points, the details are scanty and unsatisfactory. His brother Christopher, to whom allusion has been made in the course of this memoir, does not appear to have been much associated with the poet. Perhaps, differences in their political sentiments may have divorced them, although it is certain that strong feelings of fraternity subsisted between them to the last, as Milton sent for his brother on his death-bed. During the civil war, we find that sir Christopher was a man of some property, since he had to compound for his estate by paying a fine of 200*l.* For this he was subsequently consoled after his brother's death, by being elevated to the bench, and knighted by James II. He first took his seat on the bench as one of the barons of the Exchequer, and was afterwards advanced to the Common Pleas. His health appears to have declined soon after his promotion, and he was glad to resign the honours of the law for the comfort and repose of a country life. He retired to Ipswich where he died, and was buried in the porch of the church of St. Nicholas, in March 1692. By Phillips he is described as

a most estimable man, of a modest and quiet temper, preferring justice and virtue to all worldly grandeur. Dr. Symmons terms him "an old dotard," and Toland also speaks disparagingly of him, saying that he was of "a superstitious nature and a man of no parts or ability," accounting for his being raised to the judicial dignity, by assuming that "James, wanting a set of judges that could declare his will to be superior to our legal constitution, appointed him one of the barons of the Exchequer." We know not who can decide between these conflicting opinions, which represent him to be a paragon of modest virtue, and the sordid aspiring instrument of heartless tyranny; but if negative evidence may be admitted either way, we should not be disposed to form a very favourable estimate of his character. Possessed of wealth which his high station must have brought, we can no where discover that he stretched forth a kindly hand to relieve the progeny of his immortal brother, though they had sunk into poverty, even to the verge of destitution.

Milton had three sisters, Anne, Tabitha, and Sarah. Little is known of them. From the circumstance of the first being the only one named with Christopher, it is probable, that Tabitha and Sarah died in childhood. Anne was married first to a Mr. Phillips, by whom she had two sons, Edward and John, (who were educated by Milton, and became authors of some reputation), and afterwards to a Mr. Agar, who succeeded Phillips in the crown office.

The poet had three daughters by his first wife—Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne was deformed. She married, and is stated to have died in childbirth; but Dr. Birch, in contradiction to Toland and Phillips, says that she died of consumption. Mary died single. Deborah lived till 1727, when she was seventy-six years of age. She died on the 24th of August in that year. She was married to one Abraham Clarke, a weaver in Spitalfields, and, a short time before her death, was seen by Dr. Ward, professor of Rhetoric at Gresham college, who was

informed by her, that the poems of Homer and Ovid's Metamorphoses, Euripides, and the Prophecies of Isaiah, were books which her father had often called upon her to read. From the poems she repeated a number of verses. Dr. Ward was much struck by the likeness she bore to her father, and, on his mentioning the fact, she told him an interesting anecdote of Addison. The author of Cato, she said, hearing that she was alive, sent for her, but wished her to bring some vouchers to prove her descent. She waited on him accordingly, but had no sooner been introduced, than Mr. Addison said, "Madam, you need no other voucher; your face is a sufficient testimonial whose daughter you are." He presented her with a purse of guiueas, and expressed an intention of providing for her by an annuity for life. His death prevented the execution of this charitable design. It is a curious fact, that Addison's brother was afterwards governor of Madras, where Mrs. Clarke's son filled the humble office of parish-clerk. Deborah, though in straitened circumstances, appears always to have been respectable. Queen Caroline sent her a purse of fifty guineas. She spoke of her father, according to Richardson, with great tenderness, and exclaimed on seeing his picture for the first time, thirty years after his death, "Oh, my father, my dear father!" and described him to have been delightful company and the life of conversation, not only by a flow of subjects, but by unaffected cheerfulness and civility. Vertue, the engraver (whose portraits of Milton are next in value to the original by Fairthorne), showed her a crayon-drawing of her father by Fairthorne, when she exclaimed, "O Lord! that is the picture of my father! how came you by it?" and stroking down the hair of her forehead, she said, "Just so my father wore his hair."

Milton's daughters are accused of neglecting their father in his old age, as stated in a former part of this narrative. Of Deborah some defence is given by her daughter (Mrs. Foster), who stated to Dr. Ward, that she had often heard Mrs. Clarke say, that "meeting

with very ill treatment from Milton's wife, she left her father, and went to live with a lady whom she called Merian. This lady going over to Ireland, and resolving to take Milton's daughter with her, if he would give his consent, wrote a letter to him of her design, and assured him that as chance had thrown his daughter under her care, she would treat her no otherwise than as his daughter and her own companion. She lived with that lady till her marriage, and came over again to England during the troubles in Ireland, under king James II." The whole of this account is liable to exceptions. It is certain that Milton complained of his daughters' neglect; that each of them received 100*l.* as a marriage portion from his wife; and that step-mothers are generally made to bear, by virtue of a foolish adage, the responsibility of the humours and offences of their husbands' children.

Mrs. Clarke had several children, the youngest of whom, named Elizabeth, was, in 1738, the wife of one Thomas Foster, and then resided near Shoreditch church, where she kept a chandler's shop. From thence she removed to Lower Holloway, and afterwards back to the old neighbourhood, Cock Lane, Shoreditch. It was for her that a benefit was got up in 1750, when the mask of "Comus" was acted, which brought her 130*l.*, of which 20*l.* was subscribed by Tonson. The prologue for this occasion was written by Dr. Johnson. Of another child of Deborah Milton some particulars have recently been given to the public. Caleb Clarke, brother to Mrs. Foster, went to India, and, as appears from the parish register of Fort St. George, was parish clerk there from 1717 to 1719, when he died, and was buried at Fort George on the 26th of October. "By his wife Mary, whose surname does not appear," says the Edinburgh Review, from which these details are derived*, "he had three children born at Madras:—Abraham, baptised on the 2d of June, 1703; Mary, baptised on the 17th of March, 1706, and buried on December the

* No. L.

15th of the same year; and Isaac, baptised the 13th of February, 1711. Of Isaac no further aocount appears. Abraham, the great-grandson of Milton, in September, 1725, married Anna Clarke; and the baptism of his daughter, Mary Clarke, is registered on the 2d of April, 1727. With her all notices of this family cease. But as neither he nor any of his family, nor his brother Isaac, died at Madras, and as he was only twenty-four years of age at the baptism of his daughter, it is probable that the family migrated to some other part of India, and that some trace of them might yet be discovered by examination of the parish registers of Calcutta and Bombay. If they had returned to England, they could not have escaped the curiosity of the admirers and historians of Milton. We cannot apologise for the minuteness of this genealogy, or for the eagerness of our desire that it should be enlarged. We profess that superstitious veneration for the memory of that greatest of poets, which regards the slightest relic of him as sacred; and we cannot conceive either true poetical sensibility, or a just sense of the glory of England, to belong to that Englishman, who would not feel the strongest emotions at the sight of a descendant of Milton, discovered in the person even of the most humble and unlettered of human beings."

SAMUEL BUTLER.

[1612—1680.]

Two facts in the life of Samuel Butler are established by the concurrent testimony of all his biographers,—that he was a man of adversity, and that he was the author of "Hudibras." The few additional circumstances that can be gleaned concerning him, are meagre and uncertain. Even the writer of the original memoir prefixed to "Hudibras" is unknown.

Samuel Butler was born at Strensham, in Worcestershire, in February, 1612. His father, according to some authorities, was a reputable country farmer. Wood says that he was possessed of an estate of near 300*l*, per annum, most of it consisting of lease-lands; and Dr. Nash states that he was the owner of a small house and a little land with about 8*l*. a year, which was called Butler's tenement. It may be inferred from these varying accounts, that he was not a man of much substance, and that the greater part, if not the whole, of whatever he had, he held under a lease. His means, however, enabled him to place his son at the grammar school of Worcester, where he received the rudiments of his education under Mr. Henry Bright. From this point, to which he can be traced with tolerable accuracy, he is transferred by one biographer to Cambridge, and, by the tradition of a report in the neighbourhood, to Oxford; but neither of these authorities are able to assign the hall or college where he was entered: and we are forced to conclude, from the imperfectness of their information, that they merely repeated a rumour, which at best is not entitled to much credit. Wood says that Butler's brother affirmed that he was sent to Cambridge, yet that other persons asserted that it was Oxford; and

he confesses himself at a loss to decide. He adds, however, that there was a certain Samuel Butler, who was elected from Westminster school, a student of Christ's college in 1623; but that, making very little stay there, he was not matriculated; his age and the place of his birth were consequently not recorded, so that he cannot determine whether he was the author of "Hudibras." This piece of information only increases the difficulty, unless it be admitted as the probable origin of the contradictions. It is not unlikely that the fact of a Samuel Butler having been received at Christ's Church may have led, in the first instance, to the supposition that it was Samuel Butler the poet; and as speculations of this kind are exposed to obvious accidents in their carriage from one person to another, it may easily be conceived how Oxford might have been mistaken for Cambridge, and Cambridge for Oxford. That his brother, who affirmed he was at Cambridge, did not know the name of the particular college, which might be presumed to have been retained in his memory as readily as the name of the university, throws a suspicion of another kind over the statement, and justifies us in doubting the fact whether Butler was ever at either university. When a man who must have known a truth circumstantially, cannot confirm what he asserts, it may be assumed that he shapes his story to answer a purpose. Perhaps it was thought necessary to Butler's reputation, that it should be supposed he was at one of the colleges, and so the assertion was put out in such a loose way that it could not be specifically contradicted.

Having left the university (from which, if he really entered it, he never matriculated), Butler returned into the country, and obtained a situation as clerk to Mr. Jeffreys, of Earl's Croom, a justice of the peace. Here he lived for some years in an easy service, and appears to have been indulged in the prosecution of such pleasureable studies as his idle tastes directed him to, — history, poetry, music, and painting. What progress he made in music is not known; but it is stated that his

attempts at painting, although they procured him the esteem of Mr. Samuel Cooper, "the prince of limners"* in that age, were rather indifferent. Dr. Nash, who saw some of the specimens that were kept in the family of Mr. Jeffreys, tells us that they were not remarkable for excellence; and upon a second visit to inspect them, he found them, like "great Cæsar's clay," stopping up the windows!

From the house of the amiable Mr. Jeffreys, Butler was recommended to the patronage of the countess of Kent, who was an encourager of learning, and who afforded him the means of access to an extensive collection of books. There is no reason assigned for his departure from the family of Mr. Jeffreys; but the situation, whatever it was, which he held in the establishment of the countess, might probably have been considered as an improvement in his circumstances, with the additional hope it presented of future advancement. It does not appear, however, that he obtained any other advantages from his promotion, than the use of a library and the acquaintance of the learned Selden, who was steward to her ladyship, and who is said to have amassed a fortune by his management of her estates. Selden often employed Butler to write letters for him, and make translations; but the ingenious clerk reaped nothing more from these exercises of his talents, except the honour of serving an illustrious man.

The few incidents in the life of Butler, that are preserved, are given to us like statue-scenes. We catch a single attitude without motions or accessories — we see the hero, at one moment, behind a high desk in the justice's parlour — at another, writing from the dictation of Selden — and the curtain drops. We must fill up the intervals ourselves, and conduct the author of Hudibras through such imaginary experiences as we can suppose to be consistent with the probable character of such a man under such circumstances. Nothing is known of his habits, his associations, his manners, his

* Wood.

temper. It is all a field of conjecture; and we must judge of the individual, throughout the different capacities he filled (as far as we can ascertain what they were), from his works. There is no doubt that he was a man of close observation, and it is likely there was a lurking devil of satire in his conversation that gave piquancy to his society. Mr. Thyer, the editor of his reliques, had Butler's common-place book in his possession; and says that it was filled with shrewd notes, pertinent images, comparisons, and paradoxes, such as are to be picked up in a miscellaneous collision with mankind, by one who watches accurately every thing that is taking place around him. A keen sense of the ridiculous, perhaps a hasty spirit of resentment against personal injustice, a sarcastic humour, and a sunny nature floating above all, might have rendered him at once the delight and the fear of those with whom he was brought into immediate connection. We may gather, possibly, from surmises of this kind, a glimpse of the reasons why he passed so often from one service to another; and why, throughout a life which certainly was not that of an obscure or common man, he never succeeded in securing for himself an independent position. But then we do not know exactly the nature of the situations he held,—whether they were of trust or drudgery,—whether he was regarded as an humble dependant, favoured a little out of consideration for his merits, or treated as a servitor. It is certain, however, that he left the house of the countess of Kent, and went to live with sir Samuel Luke, a gentleman of family in Bedfordshire, and a commander under Oliver Cromwell. The change would scarcely seem to be for the better, so far as Butler was concerned, although the world has been the gainer. It was here that he planned and commenced "Hudibras."*

* Dr. Nash is of opinion that Butler began "Hudibras" while he was at the countess of Kent's. There is no authority sufficiently explicit to decide the point; but the inferences to be drawn from all that is known concerning the poem, tend to show that Dr. Nash's speculation must have been erroneous.

Sir Samuel Luke was a zealous puritan—a burly indefatigable person—a braggart who would carry his point at any cost, or by any subterfuge; one of those who swore that he would never cut his beard until the land was cleared of kings and bishops, and who kept his oath too; a rich, blustering, restless man, with a strong dash of superstition in his nature, infinite self-confidence, great weakness at bottom, and a terrible appetite for the wonderful, that always carried him into extremities of opinion, and constantly committed him to the most preposterous absurdities. He was, moreover, a colonel in the army of the parliament, a justice of the peace for Bedford and Surrey, and a man of estates, able to maintain the follies and extravagancies of his will at their height.* His house was the rendezvous of the puritans in that part of the country, and their frequent meetings afforded Butler an opportunity of closely investigating the nature and influence of that enthusiasm which wrought such extraordinary results upon the destinies of the whole people. It is said that Butler was a man of reserved and bashful manners, until enlivened by the bottle; but men of this kind generally have a zest for pleasant company, and seek instinctively the society of gay and festive people, who draw out their agreeable qualities, and brighten their capacity of enjoyment. The puritans, therefore, may be presumed to have been, in every point of view, distasteful to him: he disliked their principles, and he still more disliked their formal and self-denying habits; and the experience he had of them at sir Samuel Luke's may be reasonably supposed to have sharpened this natural disrelish into a feeling of ridicule and contempt. All the salient points of their character— their scriptural invectives — their airs of inspiration — their solemn farces of gesture, dialogue, and anathema—their inflated confidence—their affectation of

* It appears by a passage in Pepys' Diary, that sir Samuel Luke, independently of his Bedfordshire estate, possessed property in Northamptonshire. Sir G. Carteret bought a "good place" from him in that county, towards the payment of which he drew 3000*l.* out of Pepys's hands.—See Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 221.

a mixed mission upon earth, half-heavenly and half-mortal — their self-abasement — their scourging pride — their ostentatious simplicity in dress — their aversion for human learning and polite amusements — their Hebrew titles — their sour looks—nasal and long-drawn ejaculations — and that odious stiffness and assumption which marked them out from all other men, — were fair objects of derision to one who, like Butler, had a lively perception of whatever was *outré* in externals, or unreasonable in politics or morality. He did not care to look below the surface for the inflexible principles that guided the whining persecutors, who went over the country exterminating their enemies and glorifying themselves —who prayed and slaughtered with equal zeal and energy—and who, in the midst of their fanaticism, never forgot the one great purpose which called them from their ascetic devotions into a war against tyranny. He seized quickly upon those features which were most susceptible of burlesque, and exhibited them in such lights of humorous satire that, although the identical traits have long since passed away, the sting retains its point to the present hour. What an inexhaustible fund of roystering merriment Butler must have furnished to the retainers of this redoubtable justice of the peace, during the progress of his note-taking for "Hudibras" may be readily imagined. If there were any of the household who participated with him in his sentiments, and who helped him in his caricaturing moods with personal anecdotes and racy suggestions, we can conceive how they must have indulged their mirth when they could make an evening together over their canary.

It is generally supposed that sir Samuel Luke is the hero of "Hudibras," the doughty knight,

> " Who by his feats in civil broils
> Obtained a mighty fame."

Dr. Nash, whose conjectures respecting Butler are memorable rather for the anxiety than the sagacity they display, thinks differently ; and in a note to colonel Townley's

French translation of "Hudibras," it is asserted that the knight is not intended as a personal satire, but as the representative of the presbyterians; while Ralph, his squire, is the type of the independents. Granger, however, and other writers, assign all the honour of the portrait to sir Samuel; and Butler himself (which seems to have escaped the notice of some of the annotators) sets the question at rest in the following lines: —

"'T is sung there is a valiant Mamaluke
In foreign land, yeleped ———,
To whom we have been oft compar'd,
For person, parts, address, and beard," &c.

The blank filled up with the knight's name, abbreviating the Christian name, which gives increased familiarity and pungency to the humour, places the fact beyond controversy.* In taking sir Samuel Luke, however, for his hero, Butler did not limit himself to mere personalities; his poem had a more extensive application, and his hero was used only as a medium for a general satire upon the whole body of which he was, no doubt, a very remarkable member. The absence of incidents, and the predominance of the ridicule of habits and customs, sufficiently attest the scope of the design, which, originally suggested by the absurdities Butler witnessed in the house of sir Samuel, was gradually extended over the whole surface of puritanism. In the same way sir Martin Noell sat for the portrait of the messenger, who is described as disturbing the cabal with the account of the burnings of the mobs; and if the likenesses could be traced, it is probable that many other persons, notorious in their day, were sketched into

* That Hudibras should be compared to sir Samuel Luke, has been assumed as a reason why Hudibras could not have been intended to represent that individual. Some very ingenious speculations appear to have been thrown away to very little purpose on this subject. One of the editors of Hudibras says, that "it is scarce probable that he was intended, it being an uncommon thing to compare a person to himself." But Hudibras was not himself; he was a fictitious figure, designed to represent the qualities of sir Samuel, and, since the matter is to be overloaded with conjectures, it may be added, that Butler took this way of drawing in the likeness for the sake of impressing it the more distinctly.

the burlesque, for the sake of giving it greater immediate effect.

How long Butler remained in the service of sir Samuel Luke, where he is supposed to have discharged the duties of a clerk, or when he left him, cannot be determined. But we find, that after the restoration he was made secretary to Richard earl of Carbury, lord president of the principality of Wales, by whom he was appointed steward of Ludlow castle, when the court of marches was revived. About this time he married a Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of good fortune, and lived upon her jointure as long as it lasted *, availing himself of the leisure afforded by competence to study the common law, which, however, he never afterwards was enabled to practise. It is not unlikely that the source of his income failed before he could complete the necessary term of application to the law, as one of his biographers † affirms that his wife's property was lost by being put out on bad securities. The same writer asserts that the lady was not a widow ; and the doubt must be left as we find it, involved in contradiction and obscurity.

The first part of Hudibras, containing three cantos, was published in 1662.‡ A work wrought of so close a texture of stinging irony and sarcasm, so full of "palpable hits," striking with a strange weapon of invective, in language coarse yet familiar, crowded with homely images and living illustrations, and teeming all over with wit and learning fashioned into the most fantastic

* Wood.

† The author of the life prefixed to Hudibras.

‡ Wood says that the first part was published in 1663, and that date has been copied from him into all the subsequent biographies ; but it is evidently erroneous. Pepys says, in his Memoirs, that he bought the poem in 1662 ; and an advertisement in the Publick Intelligencer of December 23. 1662, shows that the poem was not only before the public in 1662, but that it was long enough published to be pirated. The following are the words of this quaint caution to all printing sharks : — "There is stollen abroad a most false imperfect copy of a poem called Hudibras, without name either of printer or bookseller, as fit for so lame and spurious an impression. The true and perfect edition, printed by the author's original, is sold by Richard Marriot, under St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street. That other nameless impression is a cheat, and will but abuse the buyer as well as the author, whose poem deserves to have fallen into better hands."

shapes, and carved into such pithy brevities that they might be taken out like epigrams, and used to suit all possible occasions, could not fail to excite universal curiosity. The effect was electrical. The poem was in every body's hands as fast as it could be issued, and was quoted at court nearly as soon as it was given to the public. Buckhurst, lord Dorset, celebrated in the annals of English literature for the protection he extended to men of merit, introduced the poem to his majesty, who was so pleased with its vagrant and apposite wit, that he frequently retailed passages from it in his conversation. "Hudibras" at once became the fashion, and its author was courted and flattered while the rage of popularity continued — but there ended all he gained by his satire upon the enemies of royalty. While his verses were extolled and repeated in every company, the author was suffering under the inflictions of poverty, struggling for a scanty subsistence, and living upon promises. He persevered, however, in his design, — not having yet had enough of experience to discover the fallacy of relying on the applause of patrons;— and brought out the second part in the following year. Increased approbation flowed in upon him, and he was again elated with anticipation that the royalists, to whom he had devoted his muse, would stretch out their hands to assist him in his necessities. On this occasion he appears to have derived some temporary help from them; for it is stated by Mr. Longueville, his constant friend, that king Charles ordered him a gratuity of 300*l.*, and, to enhance the compliment, directed that it should be paid to him without any deduction for fees. But even this piece of good fortune has been doubted, and the statement on which it rests is held to be deficient in proof.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary excitement produced by the publication of "Hudibras" there were readers who could not relish its broad and peculiar satire, who, perhaps, thought it was vulgar and impertinent, and did not like to see the cause of royalty sustained by

such coarse and unpolished weapons. Pepys was one of these. Hearing so much about the poem, for it was spoken of every where, he could not help buying it; but he must tell the story in his own words. The date of this incident is the 26th of December, 1662.

"To the Wardrobe. Hither come Mr. Battersby; and we falling into discourse of a new book of drollery in use, called "Hudibras," I would needs go find it out, and met with it at the Temple: cost me 2*s.* 6*d.* But when I come to read it, it is so silly an abuse of the presbyter knight going to the warrs, that I am ashamed of it; and by and by meeting at Mr. Townsend's at dinner, I sold it to him for 18*d.*"*

It appears, however, that, much as he was "ashamed of it," and although he was glad to part with it at dinner for 18*d.* after having bought it in the morning for 2*s.* 6*d.*, yet it was so rung in his ears by all his friends and acquaintances, and had, in fact, become so completely a "town talk," that he was compelled to purchase it again in about ten days after, to try whether he could like its humour, or "find it" out.

"To Lincoln's Inn Fields; and it being too soon to go to dinner, I walked up and down, and looked upon the outside of the new theatre, building in Covent Garden, which will be very fine; and so to a bookseller in the Strand, and there bought Hudibras again, it being certainly some ill humour to be so against that which all the world cries up to be the example of wit; for which I am resolved once more to read him, and see whether I can find it or no."†

The efforts of poor Mr. Pepys to reconcile himself to the ribaldry of Hudibras are highly entertaining. The first part only had appeared when the reputation of the poem had so provoked his curiosity that he could not avoid purchasing it, and then he was so ashamed of it that he sold it to a friend for less than he gave for it. But he could not escape its praises; he was condemned to hear quotations from it at all those elegant tables he fre-

* Memoirs, vol. i. p. 355. † Ibid. vol. i. p. 370.

quented, and, suspecting that he must have committed some error of judgment in deciding upon it so hastily, he bought it again in a few days. What he did with the second copy he does not inform us; but probably he found another purchaser, and was glad to get rid of it at half price. In the meantime, while he was pondering over a work in which he could discover nothing but vulgar buffoonery, but which every body else applauded for its wit, the second part came out. Upon this occasion he was resolved to act more prudently. Unable to resist the desire to read it, but determined not to expend any more money upon it, he adopted the following ingenious expedient: —

"To Paul's Church Yard, and there looked upon the second part of Hudibras, which I buy not, but borrow to read, to see if it be as good as the first, which the world cried up so mightily, though it have not a good liking in me, though I had tried but twice or three times reading *to bring myself to think it witty.*" *

It may be safely asserted that no reader of Hudibras can ever hope to relish or comprehend the poem who labours in this way *to bring himself to think it witty.* If the zest come not at once, it cannot be brought by any struggles of the imagination; for we cannot create to ourselves the faculty that is hit by such works with points that blunt their edges on duller natures. But Mr. Pepys, it must be admitted, tried hard to be in the fashion, and in a few days after he had "borrowed" the book, he took a bolder step towards bringing himself to think it witty.

"To St. Paul's Church Yard, to my bookseller's, and could not tell whether to lay out my money [it was evident that this was a consideration which always gave the secretary to the admiralty "pause"] for books of pleasure, as plays, which my nature was most earnest in; but at last, after seeing Chaucer, Dugdale's History of St. Paul's, Stow's London, Gesner, History of Trent, besides Shakespeare, Johnson, and Beaumont's plays, I

* Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 125.

at last chose Dr. Fuller's Worthys, the Cabbala, or Collections of Letters of State, and a little book, Delices de Holland, with another little book or two, all of good use or serious pleasure, and Hudibras, both parts, the book now in greatest fashion for drollery, though I cannot, I confess, see where the wit lies." *

Sometime after this, having fairly bought Hudibras as one of "the books of pleasure," although he did not yet acknowledge its wit, he happened to meet Mr. Seamour, one of the commissioners for prizes and a parliament man, who he represents as being "mighty high," and great was his astonishment to hear this gentleman, in a serious discourse before him, the secretary to the admiralty, and my lord Brouncker and sir John Minnes, quote Hudibras, and the only way he could account for it was by supposing that it was the book he had read most.† His resentment, however, about the book, or perhaps it ought to be called dissatisfaction with himself for not liking it, for Pepys was an amiable man, with certain sedate notions that prevented him from enjoying some things to the extent of which he was really capable, appears gradually to have diminished; for a few years afterwards we find him actually meeting Butler at dinner, and confessing that it was a very pleasant party, although he says nothing in particular concerning the author of that most inexplicable production which had puzzled him so long, and put him to so much trouble of bartering and thinking, and about which he probably never made up his mind. This little occurrence took place in 1668.

"Come Mr. Cooper, Hales, Harris, Mr. Butler that wrote 'Hudibras,' and Mr. Cooper's cosen Jacke; and by and by come Mr. Reeves and his wife, whom I never saw before. And there we dined: a good dinner, and company that pleased me mightily, being all eminent men in their way. Spent all the afternoon in 'talk and mirth,' and in the evening parted."

This episode is curious in two ways: it distinctly

* Memoirs, vol. ii. p. 128. † Ibid. vol. ii. p. 333.

proves the great estimation in which Hudibras was held, and the difficulty which some people had in appreciating it, a difficulty which time, that has rendered its allusions unintelligible and its costume remote, cannot be supposed to have diminished. In this age there are many people more perplexed by Hudibras than Mr. Pepys was; but then they have a better excuse. The aversion of individuals, however, ought not to be cited except as it throws light upon the caprices and humours through which all great works must pass in their way to fame. We must not be surprised at Mr. Pepys' disrelish for Hudibras, when we find Waller, himself a poet, incapable of comprehending the merit of Paradise Lost, or, indeed, of seeing any merit in it. "The blind old school master," says Waller, in one of his letters, "John Milton, hath published a tedious poem on the Fall of Man; if its length be not considered as merit, it has no other!"

The reputation of Butler appears to have brought him into the society of the great; and perhaps the fervour with which he was received may have led to a circumstance stated by Wood, and denied by the anonymous writer of his life, that the duke of Buckingham, when he was made chancellor of the university of Cambridge, appointed him to the office of his private secretary. This statement is rendered highly improbable by the fact that Butler lampooned the duke in a character he drew of him, which has hardly been exceeded for the bitterness of its invective, and which would have been in the last degree inconsistent with the supposition that he had ever received any favours from him. There is no doubt, however, that the duke promised to assist him, and that strenuous efforts were made to keep the duke to his undertaking, but all to no effect. Amongst the numerous acquaintances Butler formed in the metropolis, was that of the kindly-hearted Wycherley, the dramatist; and the following anecdote related by major Pack, discovers all the sympathy it is likely the duke ever showed for the distresses of the unfortunate poet:—

"Mr. Wycherley had always laid hold of any opportunity which offered," says Pack, "to represent to the duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the royal family, by writing his inimitable Hudibras; and that it was a reproach to the court, that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the wants he did. The duke always seemed to hearken to him with attention enough; and, after some time, undertook to recommend his pretensions to his majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his grace to name a day, when he might introduce that modest and unfortunate poet to his new patron. At last an appointment was made, and the place of meeting was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and his friend attended accordingly; the duke joined them; but, as the d—l would have it, the door of the room where they sat was open, and his grace, who had seated himself near it, observing a pimp of his acquaintance (the creature too was a knight) trip by with a brace of ladies, immediately quitted his engagement to follow another kind of business, at which he was more ready than in doing good offices to men of desert, though no one was better qualified than he, both in regard of his fortune and understanding, to protect them, and from that time to his death poor Butler never found the least effect of his promise."*

It was this duke of Buckingham who was satirized by Dryden under the name of "Zimri," and of whom the sinewy poet has bequeathed to admiring posterity that imperishable character, of which the following is a specimen: —

"A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chymist, fidler, statesman, and buffoon.
Then all for women, painting, riming, drinking;
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.

* Pack's Life of Wycherley.

Blest madman! who could every hour employ
With something new to wish, or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual theames;
And both (to show his judgment) in extreames,
So over violent, or over civil,
That every man with him was god or devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art,
Nothing went unrewarded but desert."

This libertine, who affected so much zeal on behalf of men of merit, and who could be charmed out of his intention of befriending them by any passing temptation that caught his fancy, must not be included among the patrons of Butler, although the number is so scanty that he can ill be spared. Yet a report prevailed that Butler had a share in the composition of the "Rehearsal," to which also Sprat and Martin Clifford are said to have contributed; but what parts they wrote, or whether any reliance can be placed on the truth of the statement, we have no means now of deciding.*

Butler probably subsisted during the dark period of his life that followed the production of "Hudibras," by writing wherever he could get employment; and in this way many of his works must have passed into oblivion, from the impossibility of tracing fugitive pieces through the temporary publications of the day, and collecting satisfactory evidence of their authorship. That he associated with some of the wits is tolerably certain, as we find him contributing an occasional prologue or epilogue to some of the new plays, publishing, amongst other things, an answer to Milton's "Tenure of Kings" (which, it may be presumed, came too late), and joining with Cowley and sir John Birkenhead in a miscellaneous volume, called "Wit and Loyalty revived, in a Collection of Smart Satyrs in Verse and Prose, on the late Times." We also learn that he was engaged by the lord Roos, to assist him in a domestic controversy that required some literary help. The occasion of it was the separation of the lord Roos from his wife, who was

* This report is mentioned by Wood in his account of the "Rehearsal." See Athenæ Oxonienses by Bliss, vol. iv. col. 209.

daughter to the marquis of Dorchester, and whose conduct was so loose and reprehensible, that her husband proceeded against her in the ecclesiastical courts, established her guilt, and obtained a divorce. In reference to these circumstances, the marquis of Dorchester addressed lord Roos in a letter which was published on one side of a sheet of paper, to which lord Roos replied by an effusion similarly printed, in which he had the aid of Butler. The reply is described as having been written in a "buffooning style," but being only of transitory interest, nothing more remains of it than the tradition.

The pleasure which the king took in "Hudibras" spread to all the courtiers; and those who had influence in the disposal of places, were profuse in their professions of friendship to the author, promising him a lucrative appointment from day to day. Lord Clarendon, who, being then lord high chancellor, could not have found much difficulty in providing for him, led him to expect places of considerable value and credit, because, he said, his majesty had a great respect for him, and because his poem entitled him to the protection of the royal family; but these reasons, strongly as they seemed to be impressed on his lordship's mind, had not enough of weight to induce him to keep his pledge.

These circumstances were discouraging, and might have extinguished in another man all zeal for kings and courts. But Butler, buoyed up no doubt by promises which, although repeatedly broken, were repeatedly renewed, persevered in his project, and brought out the third part of "Hudibras" in 1678. The reception of this part was as enthusiastic as that of the former two; but the reward was becoming more and more distant. Butler had lived on hope, and he was now at an age when even its realisation would have come too late. His poem was imperfect; the public were curious to learn the sequel, to ascertain through what further dilemmas he intended to carry his burly hero, and to

arrive at the grand moral of the work. But the poet was not in a condition to gratify an impatience which brought nothing with it but empty praises. Old age, want, and disappointed hopes, had exhausted his invention and quenched his gaiety. He, who was once the merriest of boon companions, and one of the liveliest wits, was now sinking into the grave; and so profound was the obscurity of his end, that hardly two accounts agree as to the manner of his death. One says that he died of consumption, another of fever, a third of old age; but it is certain that he died of want! He is said to have died on the 25th of September, 1680; and was buried privately, at the expense of his friend, Mr. Longueville, in the church of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, near which he lived in Rose Street. The funeral was attended by Mr. Longueville and seven or eight more friends. According to Wood, he was buried six feet deep at his own desire; and the spot where he was interred is at the west end of the churchyard, on the south side, under the wall of the church. Mr. Longueville was desirous that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey, and endeavoured to raise a subscription for that purpose, offering to contribute to it himself in the first instance, but every body declined. The admirers of his genius, who had flattered him living, refused to collect the means of gathering his ashes into the mausoleum of the poets!

A floating rumour has found its way into the accounts of Butler's life, that he enjoyed a pension of a hundred a-year; but it is contradicted by too many melancholy circumstances to justify us in giving it credence; and it is too certain that his life was a constant scene of privations, through which he toiled with a sustaining spirit that strikingly exemplifies the practical value of that cheerful philosophy which he illustrated by his works. Many writers have deplored his fate; but the lines of Oldham contain the most memorable apostrophe to his memory: —

"On Butler who can think without just rage,
The glory and the scandal of the age?

Fair stood his hopes when first he came to town,
Met every where with welcomes of renown;
Courted and loved by all, with wonder read,
And promises of princely favours fed.
But what reward for all had he at last,
After a life in dull expectance pass'd?
The wretch, at summing up his mis-spent days,
Found nothing left, but poverty and praise.
Of all his gains by verse he could not save
Enough to purchase flannel and a grave.
Reduced to want, he in due time fell sick,
Was fain to die, and be interred on tick;
And well might bless the fever that was sent
To rid him hence, and his worse fate prevent."

Well might Voltaire indulge his vein of sarcasm at English neglect of genius, in reference to the misfortunes of Butler. The bitterness of his reproach must be endured in the acknowledgment of its truth:—"L'auteur de ce poëme si extraordinaire s' appelait Butler," he observes; "il était de contemporain de Milton, et eut infiniment plus de réputation que lui, parcequ'il était plaisant, et que le poëme de Milton était fort triste. Butler tournait les ennemis du roi Charles II. en ridicule et tout la récompense qu'il en eut fut que le roi citait souvent ses vers. Les combats du chevalier Hudibas furent plus connus que les combats des anges et des diables du *Paradis perdu;* mais la cour d'Angleterre ne traita pas mieux le plaisant Butler, que la cour céleste ne traita le sérieux Milton, et tous deux moururent de faim ou à-peu-près."

For forty-one years after Butler's death, there was neither an inscription upon his grave, nor a stone raised in honour of his name, when alderman Barber, a printer, and lord mayor of London, erected a monument to him, with an inscription in Latin, in Westminster Abbey.*

* There is a slight but unaccountable oversight in Dr. Johnson's allusion to this monument. He says, that it was erected about sixty years after Butler's death; although in a previous line he mentions 1680 as the date of Butler's death, and the monumental inscription (which he copies) is dated 1721.

An author who had been driven to such extremities, who had such little encouragement to attempt any very weighty undertaking, and such few opportunities of prosecuting it with advantage, might be expected, after having been the sport of fortune during his life, to be made the mark of imposition after his death. With the exception of Hudibras, and perhaps two or three straggling lampoons, it was not known what he had written; consequently, many things were attributed to him on the ground of accidental resemblances, and others were put forward as his in the hope of obtaining a ready circulation through the popularity of his name. Three duodecimo volumes were published as his posthumous works, with a somewhat elaborate and pretending preface, setting forth here and there the evidences, such as they were, of the authenticity of some of the pieces, and claiming a favourable reception for the whole. The editor described them as "the remains of that great celebrated genius, Mr. Butler, author of 'Hudibras;'" and added, that "a very great expense, and almost incredible industry, had been laid out in collecting these pieces, which had been scattered through an infinite number of hands, and could not have been recovered but by the most intense application." Pieces that were thus said to be distributed amongst so many people might long continue to be accepted as genuine before they would be disowned; since each person had so small a share in the responsibility that each individual might hardly think it worth while to trouble himself about the matter. The fraud, therefore, upon the memory of Butler — as far as there was fraud in the publication — was tolerably safe; and it is to subsequent investigations we are indebted for the discovery that nearly all the fragments gathered into these volumes were surreptitious. For the circumstantial relation into which the editor enters, in reference to some of the poems, all that can be said is, that it is partly true and partly false; and that it is impossible to distinguish between those parts that may be relied upon, and those that are thrown in to increase

the interest. Thus, of the fable of the "Lion and the Fox," we are told, on the authority of a clergyman in Buckinghamshire, who had been chaplain to the old earl of Carnarvon, that Butler used to make frequent visits to his lordship's seat, and that it was in the intervals, when he was disengaged from his lordship's company, he composed that poem, which the clergyman believed was his first essay in that kind of poetry: that when he had written it, he was dissatisfied with it, and threw it aside; but that Mr. Dichfield, who was then private chaplain to his lordship, happening to get a copy of it, showed it to the clergy and other gentlemen who were in the habit of visiting there; that they all took copies of it; and that it was the reputation Butler acquired in this way which induced him to set about the composition of "Hudibras." A tradition of this kind, which discovers to us the germ of a remarkable conception, the first attempt that gave an impulse to a distinguished genius, and perhaps determined the line which he was afterwards destined to cultivate with universal applause, must always be received with pleasure and curiosity; but it ought also to be received with caution. If we were too eager to place credit in every account of this description that is handed down to us, we should by degrees see our literary *ana* converted into a bundle of legends, promptly supplied to satisfy the demand for singular personal details; and biography would, in time, be filled with loose speculations instead of close and searching inquiries into the life of the individual, the springs of his inspiration, his studies, actions, and character, and the influence he exercised upon his age. This story respecting the origin of the fable of the "Lion and the Fox" is altogether improbable. If Butler ever visited at Lord Carnarvon's, it must have been after, and not before, the publication of "Hudibras." Previously to the production of that work, his company was not sought by the nobility; and it cannot be supposed that lord Canvarvon would admit the clerk of sir Samuel Luke to such terms of intimacy as the Bucking-

hamshire clergyman, describes. If the statement be true, that Butler commenced the poem of "Hudibras" while he was in sir Samuel's service; then the success of the fable could not have been the origin of it; unless we are also to believe that he was accustomed to absent himself occasionally from the poor labours of the justice-room to spend an interval of ease with his lordship. The story hangs so clumsily together that it is only surprising the inventor of it, when he set about such a fabrication, did not accomplish his end with more ingenuity.

The three duodecimo volumes, however, in despite of the doubtfulness of their contents, ran through several editions; the sixth of which, printed in 1720, announced, amongst its attractions, "A Key to Hudibras, by Sir Roger L'Estrange." The substance of the three volumes was afterwards collected into one, and published in 1732. The number of editions through which this publication ran within the space of fifty years from the date of its first appearance, notwithstanding that the spuriousness of nearly all the pieces it contained was exposed, is very considerable. Many persons who had given some attention to the subject persevered in asserting that the work was genuine; and Dr. Gray, one of the most industrious commentators on "Hudibras," frequently alludes to it in his notes upon that poem, quoting several passages under the conviction that they were written by Butler. Of the whole collection there are but three pieces* which possess any claim to be considered as the productions of the author of "Hudibras;" and of these three one at least is doubtful.† The metrical portion of the work is contemptible;

* The Ode to Du Vall, the Case of Charles I., and the Letters of Audland and Prynne.

† The Ode to Du Vall. This piece was published in 1671 in two sheets quarto, and ascribed on the title-page to the author of "Hudibras." But many persons at the time did not believe that it was written by him. It certainly possesses some characteristic traits that might justify the supposition; but there were so many strange publications at that period, all bearing so close an identity in style, language, and point, that it would be difficult to determine in such cases by internal evidence alone. When the mode of treating subjects was generally so loose, rambling, and extrava-

and of the prose pieces, many of which are remarkable for their low, biting humour, the best are the property of sir John Birkenhead, a voluminous scribbler of the period, whose slavish scurrility was rewarded with a lucrative appointment; while Butler, who was afterwards made to bear the responsibility of his gross lampoons, was left by the court to starve.

In 1759, the reputation of Butler was ably vindicated by Mr. Thyer, keeper of the public library at Manchester, who, with great industry and judgment, collected and authenticated all the scattered pieces that could be found of the poet's writings, and published them in two volumes, under the title of "The Genuine Remains, in Prose and Verse, of Mr. Samuel Butler, author of Hudibras." These productions were printed from the original MSS. in the possession of Mr. Longueville, the old and faithful friend of the poet, and have at all events the recommendation of authenticity. It is to be regretted that this work should be but little known to the public. The poems, which form about a third of the whole, have been frequently transferred into various collections; but the prose essays remain almost sealed to the bulk of readers, although their singular merits entitle them to be preserved amongst the most remarkable fruits of Butler's acute observation and fertile imagination.

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gant, imitation was not only easy but popular; and a multitude of ribald ballads were printed, which presented so many features in common, that no particular hand could with certainty be traced in any of them. Dr. Pope, who is said by Wood to have led "an epicurean and heathenish life," seems to have taken the case and history of Du Vall under his special protection, and to have had a sort of monopoly of the topic. He produced two very frivolous but curious pieces, the one called "The Memoirs of Monsieur du Vall, containing the History of his Life and Death;" and the other, "His last Speech and Epitaph," which he followed up with an apology for concealing his own name. This last publication was soon after succeeded by the Ode, which, perhaps, might with truth be assigned to Dr. Pope himself. The reason why Pope wrote so much about Du Vall is said to have been a sentiment of revenge in consequence of being cheated by him out of his mistress. Du Vall, it appears, was a gay handsome

by pr

sistible amongst the young females in London. One of the fated victims of his fascinating powers and romantic occupation was the mistress of Dr. Pope; and for the purpose of gratifying his vengeance against them both, he wrote the life of the luckless Du Vall, who was hanged at Tyburn in the 27th year of his age.

The celebrated poem of "The Elephant in the Moon," designed as a satire upon the proceedings of the Royal Society (of which Butler was as formidable an opponent as Evelyn was an enthusiastic supporter), and an admirable burlesque of the superfine heroic drama (which, in the reign of Charles II., had superseded the plays of the Elizabethan era), taking its stilts to pieces, and showing the absurdity of that fictitious style which had exiled common sense from the stage, are amongst the pieces restored by Mr. Thyer. The parody is quite equal to the "Rehearsal," and strengthens the suspicion before alluded to, that Butler was concerned in the authorship of the latter piece.

In the prose essays Butler appears to have condensed his wit, which plays more freely, but with less direct and concentrated force in his irregular poetry, and to have aimed the more subtle strokes of his living satire with surer effect than in the very best of his trenchant doggrels. One who had so accurate and swift an eye for the follies and excesses of society, who seized with such rapidity and clearness upon the ludicrous points that presented themselves on all sides around him, and who possessed such felicitous power in generalizing particular features, and in the grouping and individualization of personal traits, might be expected to succeed best where, relieved from the encumbrances of rhyme and metre, he was at liberty to shape his thoughts and images into such forms as were best adapted to give a pungent expression to his purpose. It has, no doubt, rarely occurred that a writer who had infused so much pith into abrupt couplets, dwarfing into short exclamatory lines the very essence of extensive research and vigilant observation,—who studied men even more than books, and both with eminent success, and delivered proverbs in verse with the flowing ease of inspiration, could exhibit equal power in prose. The strength of such writers is generally found to lie in that which peculiarly distinguishes them from others—the power of reducing wit and wisdom to apophthegms in verse, so curt, clear,

and familiar, that they are like echoes of one's own reflections, and being, by the force of their brevity, quickly caught up and easily remembered, pass at once into colloquial phrases. But a critical examination of Butler's poetry will show that he was not always a master of this species of lucky composition, or that he was frequently heedless about the choice of words, and the mould of the expression; occasionally sacrificing the thought to the turn of the lines, and sometimes sacrificing both to whim or idleness. But the thought is never wholly lost; we always see it gleaming through the imperfect materials of the stanza, as we detect the graces of antique architecture in fractured plinths and capitals: the power is visible; and we are made to feel that if Butler was sometimes careless in the verbal structure of his rhythmical satire, he was wealthy in the means of filling satire with brilliant and indelible truths. It might, therefore, be concluded that in prose, where none of these obstructions could arise, a writer of this class would execute something even worthier of perpetuity than "Hudibras" itself; and, although it cannot be asserted that he has produced such excellence to the extent we had a right to anticipate, yet it must be allowed that he has left abundant specimens of his capacity in a class of compositions for which he can hardly be said to possess any reputation. Of the prose papers in Mr. Thyer's edition of his "Remains," the most striking and numerous come under the designation of "Characters." This was a favourite style of writing just before Butler's time, and had been practised with distinguished success by sir Thomas Overbury, whose "Characters" went through fourteen editions previously to 1632; and in the "Microcosmographie" of Bishop Earle," which passed through six editions between 1628 and 1633. Butler excels both these writers in the skill of his portraits, the knowledge of the world he develops, and the happy art with which he enamels a set of features that will be as readily recognised for their fidelity centuries hence—after all the modes and

habits of the present and past times shall have vanished from the earth—as they were when they were written. These "Characters" are buried in the volumes of Mr. Thyer; and as they form a very important evidence of the genius of Butler, the reader will be glad to have one or two of them resuscitated here. The following is the character of a *genus*, which will, probably, continue to entertain society through all the fluctuations of taste and manners.

"A ROMANCE WRITER:

pulls down old histories to build them up finer, again, after a new model of his own designing. He takes away all the lights of truth in history to make it the fitter tutoress of life; for Truth herself has little or nothing to do in the affairs of the world, although all matters of the greatest weight and moment are pretended and done in her name; like a weak princess that has only the title, and Falsehood all the power. He observes one very fit decorum in dating his histories in the days of old, and putting all his own inventions upon ancient times; for when the world was younger, it might, perhaps, love and fight, and do dangerous things at the rate he describes them; but since it has grown old, all these heroic feats are laid by and utterly given over, nor ever like to come in fashion again; and therefore all his images of those virtues signify no more than the statues upon dead men's tombs, that will never make them live again. He is like one of Homer's gods, that sets men together by the ears, and fetches them off again how he pleases; makes love and lovers too; brings them acquainted, and appoints meetings when and where he pleases, and at the same time betrays them, in the height of all their felicity, to miserable captivity or some other horrid calamity; for which he makes them rail at the gods, and curse their own innocent stars, when he only has done them all the injury —makes men villains, compels them to act all barbarous inhumanities by his own directions, and after inflicts the cruelest punishment on them for it. He

makes all his knights fight in fortifications, and storm one another's armour, before they can come to encounter body for body; and always matches them so equally one with another, that it is a whole page before they can guess which is likely to have the better; and he that has it is so mangled, that it had been better for them both to have parted fair at first; but when they encounter with those that are no knights, though ever so well armed and mounted, ten to one goes for nothing. As for the ladies, they are every one the most beautiful in the whole world, and that's the reason why no one of them, nor all together, with all their charms, have power to tempt away any knight from another. He differs from a just historian as a joiner does from a carpenter; the one does things plainly and substantially for use, and the other carves and polishes merely for show and ornament."

The next is of a different kind — a portrait of a temperament common enough to make its truth intelligible at first sight.

"A MELANCHOLY MAN:

is one that keeps the worst company in the world, that is, his own; and though he be always falling out and quarrelling with himself, yet he has not power to endure any other conversation. His head is haunted, like a house, with evil spirits and apparitions, that terrify and fright him out of himself, till he stands empty and forsaken. His soul lives in his body, like a mole in the earth, that labours in the dark, and casts up doubts and scruples of his own imaginations, to make that rugged and uneasy that was plain and open before. The temper of his brain being earthy, cold, and dry, is apt to breed worms, that sink so deep into it no medicine in art or nature is able to reach them. He leads his life as one leads a dog in a slip that will not follow, but is dragged along until he is almost hanged, as he has it often under consideration to treat himself in convenient time and place, if he can but catch himself alone. He makes the infirmity of his temper pass for reve-

lations, as Mahomet did by his falling sickness; and inspires himself with the wind of his own hypocondrics. His mind is full of thoughts; but they are all empty, like a nest of boxes. He sleeps little, but dreams much, and soundest when he is waking. He sees visions further off than a second-sighted man in Scotland, and dreams upon a hard point with admirable judgement. He is just so much worse than a madman, as he is below him in degree of frenzy; for among madmen, the most mad govern all the rest, and receive a natural obedience from their inferiors."

In the following delineation Butler strikes down a whole race of petty pretenders — in his time a most annoying race, and in all times as numerous and troublesome as if they were bred of the dew or the vapours, and could not be banished.

"A Small Poet:

is one that would fain make himself that which nature never meant him; like a fanatic, that inspires himself with his own whimsies. He sets up haberdasher of small poetry with a very small stock, and no credit. He believes in its invention enough to find out other men's wit; and whosoever he lights upon, either in books or company, he makes bold with as his own. This he puts together so untowardly, that you may perceive his own wit has the rickets by the swelling disproportion of the joints. You may know his wit not to be natural, it is so unquiet and troublesome in him; for as those that have money but seldom are always shaking their pockets when they have it, so does he, when he thinks he has got something that will make him appear. He is a perpetual talker; and you may know by the freedom of his discourse that he came lightly by it, as thieves spend freely what they get. He is like an Italian thief, that never robs but he murders to prevent discovery: so sure is he to cry down the man from whom he purloins, that his petty larceny of wit may pass unsuspected. He appears so over-concerned in all men's wits, as if they were but disparagements of his own;

and crys down all they do as if they were encroachments upon him. He takes jests from the owners, and breaks them as justices do false weights and pots that want measure. When he meets with anything that is very good, he changes it into small money, like three grots for a shilling, to serve several occasions. He disclaims study, pretends to take things in motion, and to shoot flying, which appears to be very true by his often missing of his mark. As for epithets, he always avoids those that are near akin to the sense. Such matches are unlawful, and not fit to be made by a Christian poet; and therefore all his care is to chuse out such as will serve, like a wooden leg, to piece out a maimed verse that wants a foot or two; and if they will but rhime now and then into the bargin, or run upon a letter, it is work of supererogation. For similitudes, he likes the hardest and most obscure best; for as ladies wear black patches to make their complexions seem fairer than they are, so, when an illustration is more obscure than the sense that went before it, it must of necessity, make it appear clearer than it did, for contraries are best set off with contraries. He has found out a new sort of poetical Georgics, a trick of sowing wit like clover-grass on barren subjects, which would yield nothing before. This is very useful for the times wherein some men say there is no room left for new invention. He will take three grains of wit like the elixir, and, projecting it upon the *iron-age*, turn it immediately into *gold*. All the business of mankind has presently vanished; the whole world has kept holiday; there has been no men but heroes and poets, no women but nymphs and shepherdesses; trees have borne fritters, and rivers flowed plum-porridge. When he writes, he commonly steers the sense of his lines by the rhyme that is at the end of them, as butchers do calves by the tail: for when he has made one line, which is easy enough, and has found out some sturdy hard word that will but rhyme, he will hammer the sense upon it like a piece of hot iron upon an anvil into what form he pleases. There

is no art in the world so rich in terms as poetry; a whole dictionary is scarce able to contain them. For there is hardly a pond, a sheep-walk, or a gravel-pit, in all Greece, but the ancient name of it became a term of art in poetry. By this means small poets have such a stock of able hard words lying by them, as dryades, hamadryades, aonides, fauni, nymphæ, sylvani, &c. that signify nothing at all; and such a world of pedantic terms of the same kind, as may serve to furnish all the new inventions and *thorough reformations* that can happen between this and Plato's great year."

The pungency, thick-ribbed sense, and Attic beauty (for it is nothing less) of these passages, must excite a desire to see them re-produced bodily; and as this is an age which, amongst other reactions, seems to have a strong impulse towards the revival of the entombed treasures of our old English literature, it is to be trusted that these fine and true pieces will have a chance of being restored.

But it is upon the poem of "Hudibras" that the popularity of Butler, amongst a large class of readers, must always depend. Where prose morality produces only uniform results of assent or approbation, the ever-fresh and vivacious fancy of "Hudibras" will be effective in a variety of ways. The points one reader fails to detect will be sure to strike another, and the pleasure thus created by true wit kindles a train of associations that runs, perpetually brightening, through society. It is in the very nature of occult satire — such as may be constantly traced in this poem — to set the springs of curiosity in motion; and as people are apt to be most delighted with an enjoyment which has cost them a little suspense, and in the end rewarded them with some unexpected entertainment, this kind of satire is always in the most esteem. It has been truly observed that, with the single exception of Shakspeare, there is no English poet who has been so frequently quoted as Butler. This is a high and unquestionable test of excellence. Sparkling epigrams may be extracted from "Hudibras" to

suit an infinite variety of applications; and if the turn of the verse be not polished, its force and truth are held to be improved by its homeliness. The very ruggedness and uncouthness of some of the lines have occasionally an effect of the most subtle art, as if the deformity had been designed (as probably it was) to heighten the broadness of the caricature, or reflect the rickety shape of the object indicated in the description. There is always some reason or excuse for these irregularities, and the massy good sense of the poet carries them off with a tone of authority, as if they were inherent to the plan.

There are so many separate and detached grounds for liking "Hudibras," that the number of its admirers cannot excite much surprise even amongst those who demur to its merits. The novelty of the measure, as Butler inflects it — the perpetual play of practical conceits — the broad laughing humour tinged with a sort of grotesque spleen that never turns acrimonious — the dazzling complexity of the double and treble rhymes, in themselves alone an exercise of surpassing ingenuity — the bewildering confusion of the dialectic dialogues — the staring valour of the heroes, and the palpable extravagance of the individual characters, afford something for every taste, and it is impossible out of the motley variety not to draw a few fragments suitable to all. Yet it may be doubted whether "Hudibras" is an universal favourite,—whether it does not derive much of its charm from tradition—and whether it is not, at best, admired in parts, and seldom applauded entire. The scenes it describes belong to a past age — the manners it depicts would be unintelligible but that we take them on trust, or guess at them through books — while the incompleteness of the work, and the deficiency of interest in the action, diminish its attractions as a continuous narrative. The very reason why it was popular when it was published, suggests the reason why it might be supposed to become unpopular in subsequent times. It was

then understood, the sects it ridiculed were known, the fidelity of its pictures was obvious, and the force of its mocking wit was appreciated; now the circumstances are reversed—we have no more notion of a puritan belted for the onslaught than we have of the flying chapel of Loretto, or the dragon of Wantley. Imagination cannot supply the necessary means of entering into the spirit of the poem; and if we would acquire them we must read the poem first, as the only way to get at the right enjoyment of it. But this fact only confirms its [illegible] merits. To have retained so much of its influence [illegible]er so much of its immediate interest had passed [illegible] is a proof of the sterling weight of the metal of which it is composed. The minted coin may lose its conventional value when its inscription is worn out; but if it be pure gold, it will always carry its intrinsic price.

The hint of "Hudibras" is supposed to have been taken from "Don Quixote;" but, except in the single circumstance that in both there is a knight and a squire, it would be difficult to discover any one point of resemblance between them. In subject and treatment they are essentially different—indeed so different that the suggestion is altogether gratuitous. The dissimilarity is so much more apparent than the likeness, that it would be superfluous to exhibit it in detail. It has also been traced to a stanza in the "Faërie Queene," which was, perhaps, one of the last places where the seed of "Hudibras" might be suspected to have been cast. Here is the stanza—

> "He that made love unto the eldest dame
> Was hight *Sir Hudibras*, an hardy man;
> Yet not so good of deeds, as great of name,
> Which he by many rash adventures wan,
> Since errant arms to pen he first began.
> More huge in strength than wise in works he was,
> And reason with fool-hardise over-ran;
> Stern melancholy did his courage pass,
> And was (for terror more) all armed in shining brass."

This blustering fellow has certainly the air of Hudibras, and his name also, which is more to the purpose; but it is evident that the suggestion goes a very short way towards furnishing the materials of Butler's rampant octo-syllabic epic. If Butler can be detected in imitation anywhere, or in following out something more than crude hints, it is in the poetry of John Clieveland, one of the most original and eccentric writers of his day. It is said of him, that "so great a man has Clieveland been in the estimation of the generality, in regard his conceits were out of the common road and wittily far-fetched, that grave men in outward appearance have not spared, in my hearing, to affirm him the best of English poets; and let them think so still, whoever pleases, provided it be made no article of faith."* This, it should be noted, was said by Edward Philips, and Clieveland was one of the fiercest party writers on the side of the royalists. The favour in which Clieveland's verses were held in the beginning of the reign of Charles II. was so great, that they were multiplied in numerous editions in rapid succession, while "Paradise Lost" was slowly making its way into notice. With much that was true and beautiful, the majority of his poems were composed of stinging ribaldry, bold invective, low humour, and blasphemous parodies. He had a genius for better and higher things, but was carried away by the current of excitement; and, like many others, he sacrificed to party what was meant for mankind. He belonged to a club of wits and loyalists that was frequented by Butler, and a close intimacy subsisted between them. Butler was known to be an ardent admirer of Clieveland's writings, and any curious reader may, by instituting a comparison, satisfy himself of the extent of the obligations under which the former lay to the latter. Dr. Farmer had a copy of Clieveland's poems, in which he had marked many passages where Butler had obviously imitated him.

* Theatrum Poetarum.

Of the numerous criticisms that have appeared upon "Hudibras," Dryden's observations contain, on the whole, the soundest, and, considering by whom they were written, the most dispassionate view of the poem. "The sort of verse," says Dryden, "which is called burlesque, consisting of eight syllables or four feet, is that which our excellent *Hudibras* has chosen. The worth of his poem is too well known to need any commendation. His satire is of the Varronian kind, though unmixed with prose. The choice of his numbers is suitable enough to his design, as he has managed it; but, in any other hand, the shortness of his verse, and the quick returns of rhyme, had debased the style. And besides the double rhyme (a necessary companion of burlesque writing) is not so proper for manly satire, for it turns earnest too much into jest, and gives us a boyish kind of pleasure. It tickles awkwardly with a kind of pain to the best sort of readers: we are pleased ungratefully, and, if I may so say, against our liking; we thank him not for giving us that unseasonable delight, when we know he could have given us a better and more solid. He might have left that task to others, who, not being able to put in thought, can only make us grin with the excrescence of a word of two or three syllables in the close. It is, indeed, below so great a master to make use of such a little instrument. But his good sense is perpetually shining through all he writes: it affords us not the time of finding faults. We pass through the levity of the rhyme, and are immediately carried into some admirable useful thought. After all, he has chosen this kind of verse, and has written the best in it; and had he taken another, he would always have excelled. As we say of a court-favourite, that whatever his office be, he still makes it uppermost, and most beneficial to himself."* Dryden's objections to the measure are answered by Dr. Johnson, who says, that if Dryden intended "that when the numbers were heroic, the

* Dryden's Juvenal.

diction should still remain vulgar, he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish that Butler had undertaken a different work." This reply is hardly justified by Dryden's remarks, which do not suggest that Butler ought to have adopted the heroic measure in a vulgar spirit, but that he ought to have adopted it for the sake of avoiding the meanness and trifling of the eight syllabled line, leaving him still to exercise his wit as he might. There appears to be a misconception on both sides. Had Butler written in any other measure, he must have failed in his intent, because no other measure could have responded so congenially to the peculiar character of his humour; but it is by no means a true canon of criticism, that the heroic line, as it is called, is not susceptible of all the modifications and varieties that can be requisite to express satire or wit. It was obviously too regular and formal for Butler, but other writers have displayed its flexibility with enough of success to show that it is a pliant as well as a stately measure. Addison censures Butler with his usual discrimination, on more firm grounds than he is found fault with by Dryden, or defended by Johnson:—"I must subjoin the double rhymes," observes that accomplished critic, "which are used in doggrel poetry, and generally applauded by ignorant readers. If the thought of the couplet in such compositions is good, the rhymes add little to it; and if bad, it will not be in the power of the rhyme to recommend it. I am afraid that great numbers of those who admire the incomparable Hudibras, do it more on account of those doggrel rhymes, than of the parts that really deserve admiration. I am sure I have heard the

"—— Pulpit, drum ecclesiastick,
Was beat with fist instead of a stick;"

and

"There was an ancient sage philosopher,
Who had read Alexander Ross over;"

more frequently quoted than the finest pieces of wit in the whole poem." This is all true and just; but it is only one additional proof of the elements of popularity contained in the poem. A work that is thus quoted more frequently than the finest pieces of wit, must have some power over the imagination or the judgment of its readers. The most comprehensive criticism upon "Hudibras" after all, is that which objects to the inconsequentiality of the general design, and the want of incidents. Pope is reported to have spoken of "Hudibras" in these terms:—"Butler set out on too narrow a plan, and even that design is not kept up. He sinks into little true particulars about the widow, &c. The enthusiastic knight, and the ignorant squire, over-religious in two different ways, is the chief point of view in it." * When Pope was forming a project for a collection of authorities who should serve as examples in different kinds of writing, he selected Butler and Swift as illustrations of the burlesque style.

It is one of the misfortunes of all new and successful writers to engender a progeny of imitators, who, unable to reach the excellence after which they strive, copy and exaggerate the defects, and give a ridiculous prominence to the peculiarities. Butler was not exempt from this destiny. "Hudibras" had no sooner made a vivid impression upon the public mind, than it produced a multitude of servile copyists, who in one form or another affected to ape its style, sentiments, and language. A new form of poetry was at once created, and Hudibrastic verse started into life like the armed men from the teeth of the dragon. A full account of the avowed imitations (not to speak of the pieces that trailed at a distance, content with vituperation and base doggrel) would occupy a larger space than it would be likely to reward. But a glance at the principal poems that followed closely on the original, may be curious as an illustration of the effect produced by a work which must be regarded as the first of its class in the language.

* Spence's Anecdotes.

Soon after the appearance of the first part of "Hudibras" an anonymous author brought out a piece written in the same metre, and mimicking the same subjects, entitled "Hudibras: the Second Part." It was evidently planned to deceive the town into the belief that it was a veritable continuation of the original. The piece opens with the May-day games, and sir Hudibras dining at the house of a justice of the peace, and the descent of the valiant magistrates upon the people to put an end to their plays, leading to a general melée, in which the busy justices are finally overcome and unhorsed. This piece is a most worthless production, and was written (perhaps in spite) by a poetaster ridiculed by Butler under the designation of Whackum. To this succeeded "Butler's Ghost; or Hudibras, the Fourth Part," written by the facetious Tom D'Urfey, in which the plot of the original is attempted to be brought to a conclusion by making the knight successful in love, with an admixture of *contre-temps* of the ludicrous kind. A Dutch, Irish, and Scotch Hudibras followed, each possessing some particular property of the absurd peculiar to itself, but all imitating the jogging and jerking of the original metre, without a single trait of its rich character. The names of a few of the remainder will indicate with sufficient accuracy the nature of their claims, as servile and counterfeit humorists:—"Pendragon, or the Carpet Knight;" "The Dissenting Hypocrite, or Occasional Conformist, with Reflections on Two of the Ringleaders;" "Vulgus Britannicus, or the British Hudibras, in Fifteen Cantos;" "The Republican Procession, with Tumultuous Cavalcade;" "Four Hudibrastic Cantos;" "The Irish Hudibras, Hesperi-neso-graphia" (a second Irish Hudibras); "Hudibras Redivivus;" "The Hudibrastic Brewer, or a Preposterous Union between Malt and Meter;" "England's Reformation," &c. It may be conceived, from the titles of these pieces, what sort of matter they contained.

While, however, the poem was thus dishonoured by drivelling imitators and splenetic jesters, ample honour

was rendered to it by those who had sufficient discernment to perceive its merits, and talents to celebrate them honourably. Dr. Harmer, Greek professor at Oxford, considered "Hudibras" worthy of being attempted in Latin, and made some experiments to test the practicability of the project. He appears to have proceeded no further then a few of the more striking similes, and probably abandoned the design, from a conviction of the impossibility of sustaining such a continous flow of the humorous vein in a translation. These versions possess considerable interest; and the following specimens, with the lines of the original prefixed, will enable the reader to estimate the difficulty of the undertaking, and to judge of Dr. Harmer's success: —

"As wind, i' th' Hypochondrics pent
Is but a blast, if downward sent;
But if it upward chance to fly,
Becomes new light and prophecy."

"Sic Hypochondriacis inclusa meatibus aura
Desinet in crepitum, si fertur prona per alvum;
Sed si summa petat, mentisque invaserit arcem,
Divinus furor est, et conscia flamma futuri."

"So Lawyers, lest the Bear Defendant,
And Plaintiff Dog shou'd make an end on 't,
Do stave and tail with writs of error,
"Reverse of Judgment and Demurrer;
To let them breathe awhile, and then
Cry whoop, and set them on again."

"Sic Legum mystæ, ne forsan pax foret Ursam
Inter tutanem sese actoremque Molossum,
Faucibus injiciunt clavos, dentesque resigunt,
Luctantesque canes coxis femorique revellunt;
Errores jurisque moras obtendere certi,
Judiciumque prius revocare ut prorsus iniquum.
Tandem post aliquod breve respiramen utrinque,
Ut pugnas iterent, crebris hortatibus urgent;
Eia, agite, O Cives, iterumque in prælia tradunt."

The whole poem of "Hudibras" was translated into German by Soltau, whose version is spoken of as a work

of considerable merit. Voltaire, in his "Lettres sur les Anglais," translates a portion of the poem, but, without warning his readers of the fact, drops several lines, taking up one part after another, and presenting the result in a continuous passage, as if it were extracted bodily from the story. But he makes full amends in his notice of the poem, which is not less remarkable for its truth than its wit:—"Il y a un poëme anglais difficile à faire connaitre aux étrangers: il s'appelle Hudibras. C'est un ouvrage tout comique, et cependant le sujet est la guerre civile du temps de Cromwell. Ce qui a fait verser tant de sang et tant de larmes a produit un poëme qui force le lecteur le plus sérieux à rire, on trouve un exemple de ce contraste dans notre *Satyre Menippée.* Certainement les Romains n'auraient point fait un poëme burlesque sur les guerres de César et de Pompée, et sur les proscriptions d'Octave et d'Antoine. Pourquoi donc les malheurs affreux que causa la ligue en France, et ceux que les guerres du roi et du parlément étalèrent en Angleterre, ont-ils pu fournir des plaisanteries? c'est qu'au fond il y avait un ridicule caché dans ces querelles funestes. Les bourgeois de Paris, à la tête de la faction des seize, melaient l'impertinence aux horreurs de la faction. Les intrigues des femmes, des légats, et des moines, avaient un côté comique, malgré les calamités qu'elles apportèrent. Les disputes théologiques et l'enthousiasme des puritains en Angleterre étaient très susceptibles de railleries; et ce fond de ridicule bien développé pouvait devenir plaisant, en écartant les horreurs tragiques qui le couvraient. Si la bulle *Unigenitus* fesait répandre du sang, le petit poëme de Philotanus n'en serait pas moins convenable au sujet, et on ne pourrait même lui reprocher que de n'être pas aussi gai, aussi plaisant, aussi varié, qu' il pouvait l'être, et de ne pas tenir dans le corps de l'ouvrage ce que promet le commencement. Le poëme d'*Hudibras,* dont je vous parle, semble être un composé de la *Satyre Ménippée* et de Don Quichotte; il sur eux l'avantage des vers. Il a celui de l'esprit; la *Satyre Ménippée*

n'eu approche pas ; elle n'est qu'un ouvrage très médiocre ; mais à force d'esprit l'auteur d'*Hudibras* a trouvé le secret d'être fort au-dessous de Don Quichotte. Le goût, la naïveté, l'art de narrer, celui de bien entremêler les aventures, celui de ne rien prodiguer, valent bien mieux que l'esprit : aussi Don Quichotte est lu de toutes les nations, et *Hudibras* n'est lu que des Anglais."

But the best and closest translation extant of "Hudibras," is that by Mr. Townley into French. This work, which is now very rare, is the most remarkable instance of a nearly literal version of an English poem into French, in which the spirit of the original is completely preserved, that has ever been accomplished; and when the peculiar difficulties of a poem, so conventional in the cast of its language as "Hudibras," are taken into consideration, the extraordinary ingenuity of the translator will become obvious. This production is, in all respects so curious, that I subjoin two specimens of the translator's choice and felicitous power of transfusion into a foreign language ; and these passages, singularly attractive in themselves, will be rendered still more acceptable by the fact, that the volume from which they are extracted cannot now be obtained, all the copies having long since passed into private collections.* The following lines are from the second canto, commencing as line 260. of "Hudibras : "—

"Bruin suivoit, bête effroyable,
Portant mine plus formidable,
Que le plus laid des Sarrasins,
On Turcs de Mahomet cousin:

* Dr. Dibdin, in his "Library Companion," speaks of this version as "the most surprising and perhaps the happiest effect of its kind known ;" and says that "it has been known to sell as high as 7*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*, in red morocco binding." But this was not the highest price it brought ; on another occasion it sold for 8*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.* The title of the work, consisting of three volumes, is "Hudibras. Poëme écrit dans le Tems des Troubles d'Angleterre ; et traduit en vers François, avec des Rémarques et des Figures. A Londres, 1757." The engravings were after designs made by Hogarth. Another edition was printed in Paris in 1819, a faithful reprint, with additional notes by Larcher, a Key to Hudibras, and some account of the translator.

Pour armure il avoit le rable,
Couvert de poil impénétrable.
Avoit au bout de son museau,
Comme un Roi de l'Inde un anneau,
Et las plus ferme tour de gorge,
Qui soit jamais sortis de forge,
Armé dit Blason, on langué,
Mais le vulgaire, bien denté,
Car ainsi de bête de proie,
Au bien d'armes, ses dents emploie,
De méme pour les combattans,
Toutes les armes sont des dents
Sélon un Auteur de mérite,
De naissance il fut Moscovite,
Parmi les Cossacs élevé,
Dont les diurneaux ont parlé,
Et, comme ils en firent usage,
J'en veux aussi remplir ma page.
Il fut cousin de Scrimanski,
Campoit et mangeoit avec lui ;
Mais quand il manquoit de pâture
Sa patte étoit sa nourriture."

The next passage is the beginning of the heroic epistle of Hudibras to his lady in the eighth canto.

"Moi qui fus grand comme César,
Me voilà Nebuchadnezzar ;
Qui fus aussi grand Capitaine,
Qu'on ait vu manœuvrer en plaine,
Par vos traitments rigoureux
Je broute l'herbe avec les bœufs.
Car perdant, par votre colere,
L'accès à mon seul bien sur terre,
Chassé du Paradis heureux
De vos boutés et vos beaux yeux,
Perdu pour le monde, et ma belle,
Mon ban, ma peine est éternelle ;
Car perdant l'espoir de gagner
Votre cœur, le mien va crever.
Mais avant la sentence rendre,
Si vous daignez encor m'entendre,
Vous tomberez bientôt d'accord
Qu'avec moi vous avez grand tort.
Parole je vous ai donnée,

Que je n'ai point exécutée
Jusqu'a présent, et j'en conviens ;
Mais, en même temps, je soutiens
Que je ne l'ai pas violée,
Quoique pour un temps différée."

In the "Bibliotheca Britannica" (published in 1824), it is stated that this masterly translation was made by Mr. John Townley, and not by colonel Francis Townley, as has been generally reported. The publication of it, says the same authority, was superintended by M. l'abbé Tuberville Needham, and the "Rémarques" were written by Larcher. The original English text is printed on the opposite page to the French, and the whole is illustrated with engravings after the designs of Hogarth. This account of the work is partially confirmed by a more recent authority. Speaking of Charles Townley, the collector of the Townley marbles in the British Museum, it is observed in Crabbe's "Universal Historical Dictionary," that his uncle John Townley, an officer in the French service, who died in 1782, at the age of eighty-five, translated "Hudibras" into French. It is not improbable that as the translator enjoyed military rank in the French service, he may thus have acquired the title of colonel by which he is generally known.

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